Commentary

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What Health-Care Crisis?
Irwin M. Stelzer

Against the New Pessimism
Francis Fukuyama

Talking to the Enemy—A Story
Avner Mandelman

The Great Polish Experiment
George Weigel

How to Read Philip Roth
Hillel Halkin

A Dissent on "Schindler's List"
Philip Gourevitch

On a Palestinian State: An Exchange
David Bar-Illan & Critics

Books in Review: Martin Kramer / Dan Himmelfarb / Susan Wiviott / Daniel J. Silver / Jonathan D. Sarna

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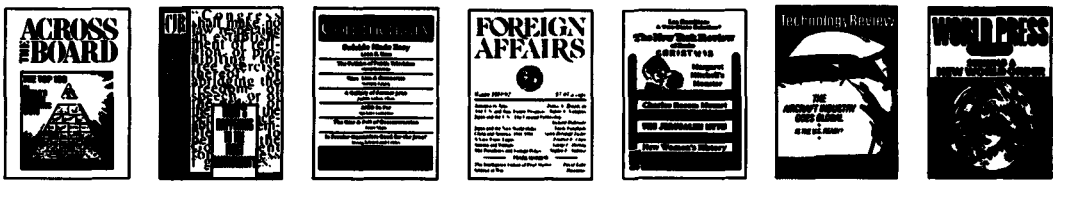

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Letters from Readers

On a Palestinian State

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Instead of attempting a learned dissertation on and critique of David Bar-Illan's "Why a Palestinian State Is Still a Mortal Threat" [November 1993], I will, for the sake of argument, agree that everything he says is on the mark, and ask him only one thing in return: exactly what *should* Israel do with the West Bank and Gaza and their almost two million rebellious Palestinians? It is very easy to fault the current agreement as a blueprint for disaster, so we are open to Mr. Bar-Illan's constructive and realistic ideas. But these would, of course, have to be approved by a viable majority of the Palestinians and their representative organization. If, for whatever reason, they do not approve, we can forget it, since it will never come to pass. The tragedy of the situation is that there are no clear-cut good choices, only bad and worse ones. I doubt that Mr. Bar-Illan is prepared to suggest the same binationalism the Israeli Left espoused for a quarter of a century and which is now considered a dirty word.

JOSEPH SHARON
Ellenville, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan's premise ("there *is* no going back for Israel") is dubious if taken in the context of his article. Did Israel ("the aggressor") really care about being "sanctioned" when, in self-defense, it invaded Lebanon or when it bombed the Osirak installation in Iraq? For now, the Israel Defense Force would have little trouble (political or military) retaking the "occupied territories" in the interests of self-preservation, despite Mr. Bar-Illan's whining about the "more efficient and sophisticated" Arab armies (as if the present "Arab" armies were a collective unit instead of armed forces that have not infrequently fought one another).

It is interesting that Mr. Bar-Illan likens financial support for a "corrupt regime" (i.e., the embryonic Palestinian state) to a "bottomless pit." Speaking of which, the U.S. has been giving Israel $3 billion yearly; this equals 5 percent of Israel's GNP, and averages $600-$700 for every citizen! Given the relative enormity of this handout (much more than to any other country) and the ease with which it is annually rubber-stamped in Congress, is it believable that the U.S. could not find, say, 3 percent of this amount (i.e., $100 million) to bolster the last chance for peace?

Two points ignored by Mr. Bar-Illan could vindicate his fears in the foreseeable future. First, the U.S., with its foreign policy arguably in shambles, may not always be counted on for knee-jerk support. Additionally, with America turning inward (note the massive Defense Department build-down) and the U.S.-Soviet bipolarity gone, Israel has reason to feel insecure. Second, due to cultural and socioeconomic differences, fertility rates of the Arab nations far outpace that of Israel. Thus, Israel's neighbors are increasing their populations with ever-accelerating speed. Within a decade or so, the sheer numbers of the "enemy" will be cause enough for consternation. For these reasons, it is in the best interest of Israel to go for a "make-or-break" peace now. Far better to be surrounded by (coexisting with?) bickering (but peaceful) neighbors in a regional trading bloc than to be at war forever with burgeoning nuclear-armed fundamentalist regimes. And if this new peace fails? For the moment at least, the U.S., though looking more rudderless, still has enough superpower momentum and commitment to Israel to support its "going back."

PETER BLOCK
Pittsford, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his perspicacious analysis of the possible effects of the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington by Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat, David Bar-Illan comes to the conclusion that a Palestinian state is in the offing . . . . Assuming that an "immediate daily barrage of Katyushas" on targets in Israel is not probable (after all, the Arabs have learned something from the past decades of dealing with the Jewish state), Mr. Bar-Illan nevertheless foresees a continuation of such lesser forms of violence

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and terror as ambushes, armed assaults, suicide bombers, and so forth. Nor, for that matter, does it appear that the generalized Arab boycott will evanesce; on the contrary, it may even be strengthened, on the theory, plausible to the Arabs, that pressure should not be lightened until the very last Arab demand has been fully satisfied.

If the above scenario is accurate, the situation facing the Jewish state will not be "the unavoidable birth pangs of the new era" but, rather, a sign that the old era of enmity and warfare is still in its prime and proceeding as always planned. To change the metaphor, the implacable Arabian sea will continue to be roiled by the winds of animosity and hatred and one more storm like those preceding it will be brewing, this time with the latest weaponry and with a strategic position as favorable to invasion as it was in 1948 and 1967.

Of course, Israel will be able to take countermeasures to specific acts of terrorism and violence; after all, the principle of self-defense, including anticipatory self-defense, still exists, as it always has and as it did in the case of the aerial strike in June 1981 against the Iraqi nuclear reactor. However, though such measures may be effective in the short run, in the long run they can be only palliatives at best, not striking at the heart of the problem posed by the recent Washington accord and the agreements implementing it that will undoubtedly come into being.

Fortunately, the picture need not be as dark as Mr. Bar-Illan has made it out to be. Specifically, there does exist a means of "going back" for Israel, even under doctrines of international law which generally require treaties and other international agreements to be complied with as binding obligations. One basic exception to the general rule is the principle of *rebus sic stantibus*, which, roughly translated, means "circumstances as they now are." The *rebus* doctrine serves to relieve governments of their treaty and agreement obligations when the conditions which led to the creation of these obligations are no longer perceived to exist. The doctrine, it must be noted, has often in the past been gravely abused by states with evil or dishonorable intentions; the most flagrant and historic example of such abuse occurred in 1914 when the imperial German government cited it to justify its violation of the various Belgian neutrality treaties dating from 1839. A more legitimate use of the doctrine took place in the 1950's when de Gaulle cited it to nullify French participation in the NATO defense system and to force the U.S. to give up its military installations in and withdraw its troops from French territory.

To differ gently from Mr. Bar-Illan's bleak view that there is no way back for Israel even under the worst of circumstances involving the establishment of a Palestinian state posing a mortal threat to the Jewish state, . . . I would remind him that agreements made in days of hopefulness for the future can be undone when changed circumstances make it evident that the wrong fork in the road was taken. Blunders can become "historic," in the words of the Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, but only when a nation persists in following the wrong road instead of retracing the steps taken and starting afresh. *Rebus sic stantibus*, properly employed, does give a state like Israel a second chance.

SAMUEL POLLACK
Sarasota, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Masked men gunned down Asad Siftawi, the leading Gaza PLO personality, five weeks after the Arafat-Rabin handshake. The outlook of this "moderate," whom Rabin admired and whose murder was condemned by President Clinton . . . , has a crucial bearing on David Bar-Illan's "Why a Palestinian State Is Still a Mortal Threat."

Remember that this same Siftawi, in explaining his acceptance of making peace with Israel, said: "As a good Muslim I approve of what happened. There are some things in Islam that are forbidden, like eating pork. But when there is nothing else to eat, you may eat pork." . . . For Siftawi, then, this was a loathsome . . . peace. . . .

Failing to recognize the less than universal euphoria in Gaza over the Washington handshake, Siftawi failed to understand his need for the protection of bodyguards, even when picking up his son at elementary school. His son told an Israeli newspaper that he was not frightened when gunmen approached his father because his father was identified with the struggle for Gaza. He could not imagine that anyone would want to hurt his father.

Between the overall perceptions and significant differences as to what has already been agreed upon, we can hardly be said to be on the road to peace. . . .

The threat to Israel may not be mortal at this point, but . . . we may well be headed for new hardships. . . .

TESSA L. AUMAN
Bnei Darom, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Seeing requires distance! Right now, many thousands of miles away, in the heart of the American heartland, I see an Israel bent on destroying itself. . . . If the September 13 agreement with the PLO, so lucidly analyzed by David Bar-Illan, proves a success, it will lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. . . . Once established, such a state . . . would erode Israel's strategic depth to unmanageable limits, and the Jewish state would encounter irresistible incentives to make a preemptive strike. But even if Jerusalem chose not to preempt, enemy-state inclinations to strike first, possibly with unconventional weapons, would be heightened. Either way, the creation of "Palestine" would enlarge the risks of regional nuclear war. Of course, supporters of the agreement claim that autonomy, not Palestinian sovereignty, is their only objective; but even if they are being truthful, they are insufferably naive.

Trying to describe what is happening, I am forced to turn away from the dreadfully bloodless world of political science, and toward the tormented human, all too human, world of William Butler Yeats. In his marvelous poem, "The Second Coming," the great Irish poet speaks of a time when "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world/ The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/ The ceremony of innocence is drowned. . . ." I fear that Israel may soon be living in such a time. . . .

LOUIS RENÉ BERES
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

DAVID BAR-ILLAN writes:

I fully agree with Joseph Sharon's assertion that, for Israel, "there are no clear-cut good choices, only bad and worse ones."

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All courses of action—and inaction—entail risks, and it would be foolhardy to suggest that an ideal solution, or even a desirable one, exists.

I am, however, convinced that the Oslo agreement which produced the Declaration of Principles is not a lesser evil but the worst possible alternative and a prescription for war. If allowed to materialize, it will create a Palestinian state on the 1949 armistice lines (with minor adjustments) and an uninterrupted, radical, Arab-Muslim mass from Tel Aviv's outskirts to Pakistan. As long as Israel's neighbors are military dictatorships, I can imagine no worse choice than one which will deprive Israel of such natural barriers as the Golan and the Judea-Samaria mountains.

Is there an alternative? The dramatic "breakthrough" in Oslo managed to overshadow the fact that the "Madrid-formula" negotiations between Israel and its neighbors had not broken down. True, they were not making much progress. But the fact is that the much-maligned Shamir government had achieved what was considered impossible ever since the establishment of Israel: direct, bilateral talks with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, and with a Palestinian delegation representing only the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. Neither the Jerusalem Arabs nor the Palestinian "diaspora" were represented. This was a tremendous achievement. It meant that both the Arabs of Palestine and the Arab regimes agreed to negotiation without the PLO, which by definition represents Palestinian statehood and the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees.

That the Arabs would create an impasse during the negotiations was not only expected but inevitable. Dictatorial regimes, free of internal pressure to make peace, can afford long freezes in negotiations. But for Israel to be intimidated by such tactics and impetuously rush into a solution which all its governments, including Labor, have always considered suicidal, was reckless and irresponsible. True, the impasse produced some international pressure and occasional media hysteria. But what was being decided was not the price of eggs; it was Israel's fate.

Moreover, the Shamir government's achievement in excluding Arafat from the negotiations helped reduce his following in the administered territories. His exclusion and his inability to provide financial support for the "martyrs" of the *intifada* and salaries for the organization's bureaucracy and mercenary army threatened to eliminate him as a player in the Middle East—a prospect most Arab regimes welcomed. In fact, in the weeks before Oslo, Arafat was becoming a laughingstock in the territories. His efforts to sabotage the Washington talks were the desperate attempts of a fading leader. Had events been allowed to take their natural course, the PLO would have become irrelevant and talks with the representatives of the local population might have borne fruit. It was precisely this course that Yitzhak Rabin had consistently espoused. An advocate of territorial compromise—a euphemism for partitioning Judea and Samaria more or less according to the old Allon plan—he believed Israel could reach an understanding only with the local inhabitants, not with the PLO.

The chances for this or any other plan were far from brilliant. But with the PLO's influence diminishing every day, a solution acceptable to Israel might have been achieved. Negotiations would have had to take some time—not perhaps the fourteen years it took to settle the matter of the Panama Canal, but certainly longer than the Oslo blitz—and they would not have produced dramatic breakthroughs politically useful to the party then in power in Israel. But the result could have been a Camp David-type autonomy for the Arabs of Judea and Samaria, which would have let Israel retain military control of the mountain ridges and the Jordan valley, or an outright partition of the area. This would have depended on the philosophy of the Israeli government then in power. There are partition plans today which would leave 85 percent of the Arab population outside Israeli jurisdiction while a similar percentage of the settlers would remain under Israeli rule.

Had the talks failed, Israel could have continued to live with the status quo. To claim that "nothing could be worse," as many of the agreement's supporters do, is ludicrous. Israel enjoyed unprecedented economic growth during the *intifada* and absorbed a half-million immigrants. Even before Labor assumed power, Israel resumed diplomatic relations with the Soviets, established relations with China, normalized relations with India, and restored them with most of Africa. The losses in life per capita from hostile action throughout this period were less than a tenth of the homicide rate in American cities.

Would a "viable majority" of "almost two million rebellious Palestinians" accept such solutions? First, one should separate the 750,000 residents of the Gaza district from the 900,000 Judea and Samaria Arabs. The former are stateless people who live in an area whose strategic importance to Israel is not crucial. Unlike the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria, they do not carry Jordanian passports. The Gaza area also means less in Jewish history than Judea and Samaria—the cradle of Jewish nationhood and civilization. The "strip" can become an independent zone following a carefully planned and phased transition period.

The main problem is Judea and Samaria—the "West Bank"—and Mr. Sharon is probably correct in assuming that neither a partition of the area nor autonomy would find support among a majority of Palestinians. But surely he must realize by now that the present agreement does not command such a majority, either. Even if the "final-status" treaty divides Jerusalem and makes it the capital of a Palestinian state, it is doubtful that a majority of Palestinians would support the solution. (Foreign Minister Shimon Peres seemed aware of this when, in an interview with a French newspaper, he alluded to the possibility that Hamas would win the elections in the territories—after all, it has been winning every local election since the agreement. Peres assured his interviewer that if this happened, the Declaration of Principles would be null and void.) There is only one solution for which a guaranteed Palestinian majority exists. It is stipulated in the PLO covenant which Arafat will not change: the elimination of the state of Israel.

Peter Block disagrees with my contention that the agreement is virtually irreversible. He doubts that Israel would worry about world opinion or sanctions if it felt it should be canceled. I do not wholly disagree. I did aver that "a daily barrage of Katyushas," for example, would trigger an Israeli

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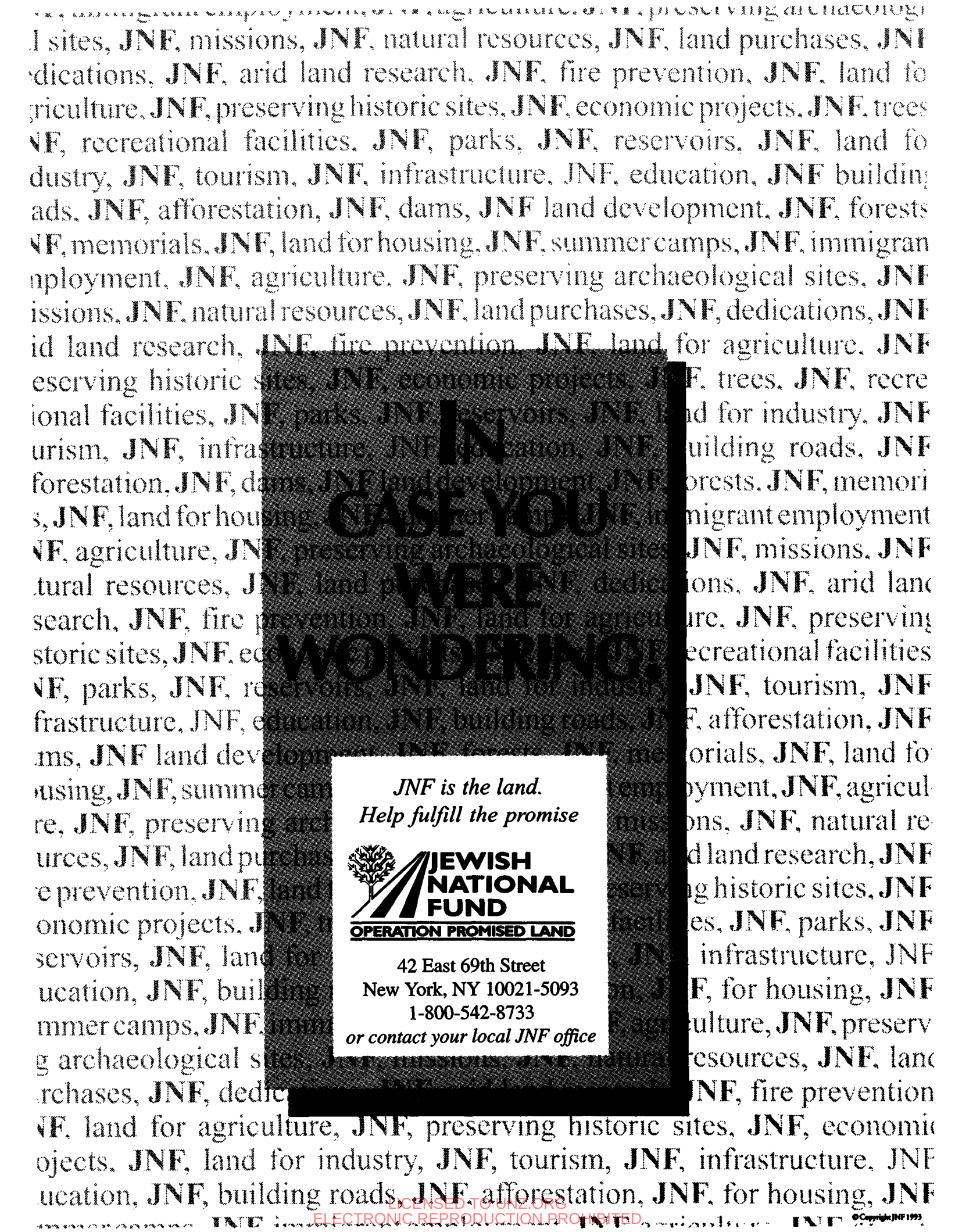

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attempt at return to the status quo ante. Faced by a growing PLO army under the guise of a "strong police force," or a Palestinian alliance with Syria or Iraq, or an intolerable number of terrorist infiltrations into the Green Line, Israel would be forced to risk the world's wrath and invade the new state. But no matter how outrageous the Palestinian provocation, Israel would have to bear the consequences of invading a sovereign country.

At which point I doubt whether invoking the principle of *rebus sic stantibus*, as suggested by Samuel Pollack, would make much difference. After all, even now no one expects Israel to withdraw from the agreement simply because the PLO has not kept its commitment to change the PLO covenant and to combat terrorism. As former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith has pointed out, democracies seldom do anything about the violation of agreements by their dictatorial adversaries. Repeated Soviet violations of arms-control agreements were greeted by hand-wringing or—worse—denial.

When Egypt violated an agreement with Israel and moved surface-to-air missiles to the Canal Zone after the war of attrition in 1970, Israel was warned not to act by the Nixon administration. The missiles almost neutralized the power of the Israeli air force in the initial stages of the 1973 war, which Israel almost lost. Indeed, the world community never showed much understanding for preemptive Israeli actions, even when they could easily qualify as "anticipatory self-defense," as in the case of the Osirak bombing. An attack on the nascent Palestinian state would almost certainly be condemned as outright aggression by the world community.

Ultimately, this might not deter Israel—particularly if the toll of terrorism were to become intolerable. But the price—not only in international standing but in Israeli casualties in a war against the by-then well-armed Palestinans and the massive armies of their allies—might be higher than in any previous Arab-Israeli war.

If there is one thing both supporters of the Declaration of Principles and its opponents agree on, it is the possibility of a conventional and nonconventional regional conflagration. The difference between the two is that the former, including most decidedly the Israeli government, believe that an Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 lines and a peace treaty with Israel's immediate neighbors will ensure that Syria, Jordan, and Palestine will remain "bickering but peaceful," as Mr. Block puts it. The latter, like Louis René Beres, doubt that a piece of paper will keep the Assads and Arafats of this world from joining in a concerted Islamic effort to crush a dwarfed Israel. So do I.

Holocaust Denial

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander's review of Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust* [Books in Review, November 1993] will be of no slight interest to future cultural historians. He writes that the book deals with "the most highly publicized form of travesty to which the Holocaust has been made subject in our day," but that is not correct. Lipstadt keeps to fringe figures who probably relish the publicity afforded them by their critics, and would otherwise remain in deserved obscurity. But she ignores others, including "the most highly publicized" apologist for Nazi crimes, namely, the author of the review, who [elsewhere] dismisse[d] the Holocaust with derision as an "exploded fiction"—and to make sure that no one mistakes his values, add[ed] that nothing more than "oppression" was suffered by (in the words of John Quincy Adams) "that hapless race of native Americans, which we are exterminating with such merciless and perfidious cruelty," and by those who endured the pleasures of the Atlantic passage and slavery. On Mr. Alexander's efforts to evade the meaning of what he wrote, once exposed, see the *Nation*, August 17, 1992 and February 15, 1993.

Lipstadt writes (in a letter to the *New York Times*, November 8, 1993) that "a comprehensive analysis of the deniers was necessary." Perhaps, but she has been careful not to provide it.

Mr. Alexander, of course, [was] not referring to the Nazi slaughter of the Jews, rather of the Gypsies—in a similar manner, at the same time, though like his fellow-negationists he denies the facts. I do not want to suggest that the two forms of negationism are morally on a par; denial of the Holocaust of the Gypsies is, plainly, *far worse*. Jews have defenders; those who deny the crimes against them are universally reviled. Gypsies have few defenders; those who contemptuously dismiss the Nazi crimes against them are considered quite respectable. Furthermore, Gypsies are still being subjected to terror and repression. Germany—Germany!—is sending them back to Romania, to pogroms and violence, right now. Denial of Nazi crimes against the Gypsies has immediate and appalling human consequences.

Naturally, I am honored to be targeted by such authors, both of whom compile impressive fabrications about the "Faurisson affair" and my role in it—all conscious deceit, surely, since every invention has been refuted in print innumerable times, as they know. They also know very well my own views on the matter, expressed in the introduction to my first book of political essays in 1969, and endlessly repeated since: by even agreeing to enter the arena of debate with apologists who claim that "Jews are a cancer eating away at the vitality of the German people" and who attempt to diminish or deny Nazi crimes, "one has already lost one's humanity," though it is sometimes necessary to undertake such degrading tasks.

Both Mr. Alexander and Lipstadt extract a few words from this passage, offering them as proof that I deny freedom of speech to views I do not like—by unwillingness to debate! Both naturally suppress the topic I address—clearly, explicitly, unambiguously, in the words that immediately precede the sentence they maliciously distort for their purposes. In their hands, by expressing my distaste for even debating Holocaust deniers, I am supporting them and denying freedom of speech. These comments of mine "constitute the most accurate assessment" of my behavior, Lipstadt writes; correctly, once we replace fabrication by fact. And this colossal example of lies and stupidity, which would have impressed Goebbels himself, is a typical example of her practice, and of her reviewer's, from whom she borrowed this particular gem.

I will not waste my time, or your space, by once again pursuing Mr. Alexander through the morass of deceit he concocts, though the in-

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terested reader will notice his utter contempt for freedom of speech as he repeats with approval a position that one might expect from some mullah in Qom. Rather, I will keep to my own advice of 25 years ago. If any honest reader is interested in the matter, I will be glad to provide details, once again. I would also urge some attention to the wise words of Nahum Goldmann, shortly before he died: it "is a kind of *hillul haShem*, a banalization of the sacred tragedy of the *Shoah*," to "misuse it" for power interests—or career interests, or others.

NOAM CHOMSKY
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Edward Alexander maliciously smears Noam Chomsky for his supposed "immaculate agnosticism" regarding whether the Holocaust occurred, as well as other allegedly bizarre revisionisms construed by Mr. Alexander as support for blatantly anti-Semitic positions. Of course, nowhere does Mr. Alexander make his accusations explicit; innuendo is the tactic of choice. . . .

Unfortunately, in an early chapter of her book, Deborah Lipstadt repeats Mr. Alexander's twelve-year-old lies about Chomsky's supposed Vietnam-era attempts to suppress free speech. These lies now seem to occupy a prominent place in the conventional wisdom of some. Liptstadt's treatment of Chomsky's alleged role in "supporting" Holocaust denial—as a fact rather than as a mattter of free speech and academic freedom—certainly calls into question her professional competence. A responsible reviewer would have tasked her for getting this business wrong; Mr. Alexander chides her for smearing Noam Chomsky too little. . . .

PATRICK O'HAYER
Libertyville, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander devotes a good deal of attention to Noam Chomsky's defense of the French Holocaust denier, Robert Faurisson. In fact, Chomsky went so far as to write an introduction to Faurisson's book, though he claims that he was merely defending free speech. One wonders, however, whether he has launched similar

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Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank")
Can Israel survive without it?

With the "peace agreement" between Israel and the PLO, the Middle East and Israel have entered a new phase. It will inevitably lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Can Israel survive this dismemberment? Is it in the best interest of the United States?

What are the facts?

The Root of the Conflict. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. It is about Israel's very existence. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan"; it calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

The Importance of Territory. Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance. But this is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over $50 billion of the most advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—enormous quantities of tanks, aircraft and much more. The Arab states possess large arsenals of chemical and biological weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single target and one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank') Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control over the 'West Bank'."

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is an indispensable line of defense. It totally controls access to Israel's heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense and to be able to peer deeply into enemy territory. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them.

Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized? Even those who want Israel to retreat to her pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the surrounding hostile Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum to exist And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There are over fifteen Palestinian Arab terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently come to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time", neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank".

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crusades on behalf of specific writers in countries like North Vietnam or Cuba.

A clue to Chomsky's real motive might lie in a little-noticed article he wrote with Edward S. Herman that was published in the *Nation* (June 25, 1977). In that article, he engaged in his own Holocaust denial: denial of Khmer Rouge genocide against the Cambodian people; he also denounced the many reports of mass murder that had already appeared by that time.

I have read much Holocaust-denial literature over the years, and immediately noticed the striking parallels between the deniers and Chomsky's approach. For example:

• Deniers seem to blame Roosevelt and Churchill for the outbreak of World War II and assign no blame to Hitler. They also argue that German concentration camps were not death camps but benign places of detention. Similarly, Chomsky in his article lays the blame for Cambodia's problems on the United States while ignoring the role of the Khmer Rouge. He approvingly cites a book published by the far-Left Monthly Review Press, saying it presents

> a carefully documented study of the destructive American impact on Cambodia and the success of the Cambodian revolutionaries [Khmer Rouge] in overcoming it, giving a very favorable picture of their programs and policies. . . .

• Deniers argue that the "truth" about the Holocaust has been covered up by the Zionist-controlled media, which have exaggerated German atrocities. In fact, media coverup is a constant theme of denier literature, and in his article Chomsky argues that the media were covering up America's destructive influence on Cambodia while maintaining "the illusion of an open press and society." He also dismisses reports of Khmer Rouge atrocities.

• Deniers argue in terms of moral equivalencies—that is, while there were atrocities, they occurred on both sides, and the deplorable conditions in German concentration camps occurred as a result of Allied bombings. Chomsky argues that "specialists who have studied the full range of evidence available" conclude that the Khmer executions

> *numbered at most in the thousands*; that these were localized in areas of limited Khmer Rouge influence and unusual peasant discontent, where brutal revenge killings were aggravated by the threat of starvation resulting from the American destruction and killing. . . . [Emphasis added]

At the time Noam Chomsky wrote the *Nation* article, there was sufficient information about Khmer policies to know what was really happening in Cambodia. Yet he was so blinded by his anti-Americanism that he deliberately ignored the massive evidence and denied it. . . .

JOHN C. ZIMMERMAN
University of Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I thoroughly agree that the *Shoah*, or Holocaust, most certainly occurred, and only a blind idiot or liar would attempt to deny it. All those I have known personally who attempted to deny the Holocaust fit into the first category; I will not speculate as to their motives, but none were Palestinian or particularly pro-Palestinian. One may legitimately argue as to whether five million or six million is nearer to the exact number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust (of course, if one were to include non-Jewish victims, the figure would be much higher than six million), but there is no way that I could honestly say that the *Shoah*, or Holocaust, never occurred.

However, equally undeniable is the Palestinian *Nakba*, or "Catastrophe," of 1948, which today would be called "ethnic cleansing." To deny the *Nakba* is to be guilty of the same willful blindness, stupidity, and dishonesty as to deny the Holocaust.

Edward Alexander says: "Although it may be impolite to say so these days, articles denying the Holocaust have long been a staple of publications of the PLO." While I cannot categorically state that this is untrue, as I have not read all PLO publications, I do have reason to doubt its veracity. First, I have read a number of PLO publications and have never encountered any such thing. Second, I have known a considerable number of Palestinians; not one of them denied that the Holocaust occurred, though they considered it to be a monstrous injustice that Palestinians should be punished for German crimes, a sentiment with which I concur. Assuming that articles denying the Holocaust have appeared in PLO publications (which I seriously doubt), I would say that this is both dishonest and a tactical error, because it damages the Palestinian cause by associating it with liars and willfully blind idiots.

The point is this: while the "ethnic cleansing" of the Palestinian *Nakba*, or Catastrophe, of 1948 is not a crime of the same type or on the same scale as the Holocaust, it is nevertheless a gigantic, monstrous crime and injustice. Those who persistently deny the Palestinian Catastrophe of 1948 have no grounds for criticizing those who deny the Holocaust, since both are guilty of the same sort of lies and dishonesty. Some day someone is going to write a book entitled *Denying the Nakba*.

MICHAEL MCCLAIN
Middletown, Ohio

EDWARD ALEXANDER writes:

The passage of time has done nothing to diminish those qualities of mind and character, that unique blend of propagandist's tricks and low cunning, which led Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the March 1969 issue of COMMENTARY, to label Noam Chomsky (who had been forced to confess faking "quotations" from Harry Truman) "an intellectual crook." Only the third sentence of Mr. Chomsky's letter refers to anything I wrote in my review of Deborah Lipstadt's book; but I can readily understand his eagerness to avoid the subject of his lengthy collaboration with the neo-Nazis by ponderous ironies about my alleged campaign against Gypsies, American Indians, and black slaves.

The mind of the propagandist is very much like the spider in Swift's fable, "which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but fly-band and cobweb." Those who are morbidly curious about how Mr. Chomsky weaves his cobweb may wish to contemplate the following:

In the May/June 1990 issue of *Congress Monthly* I referred, in the midst of a literary review and with no further elaboration, to "every exploded fiction about the Holocaust—ranging from the notion that not only Jews but also Poles,

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Gypsies, Communists, and homosexuals were chosen by the Nazis for annihilation." Here, thought Mr. Chomsky, was meat and drink to batten on at last—the opportunity to project one's own intentions upon the enemy and to claim, as he has done repeatedly since then, that *I* am the author of "pro-Nazi apologetics."

For the benefit of readers who may find Mr. Chomsky's oracular intuitions here a bit murky, I will volunteer my services as logician-in-ordinary to the sage of MIT, who appears to be saying this: "You people who claim that the Jews alone were singled out by the Nazis for total destruction are the true Nazi apologists, because a genuine anti-Nazi would insist [erroneously, of course] that Hitler planned to annihilate all identifiable national groups except ethnic Germans." There is a kind of logic here, but it is of the sort that Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in his book, *Assassins of Memory*, imputes to Mr. Chomsky: "When logic has no other end than self-defense, it goes mad."

Mr. Chomsky, of course, does not value truth for its own sake, but has now become a champion of the Gypsies in order, so he thinks, to *épater les Juifs* by making Hitler into an equal-opportunity destroyer. Yet neither in the article mentioned above nor anywhere else have I denied Nazi persecution, sometimes extending to murder, of Gypsies (as well as of Poles and homosexuals).

In the case of the Gypsies (Romani), the word "genocide," in the sense defined by Raphael Lemkin in 1943—humiliation, dehumanization, forcible, even murderous denationalization of a group—may be appropriate. Nazi policies toward the Gypsies were unclear and inconsistent. In Germany itself the Nazis murdered the so-called "mixed" or "impure" Gypsies ("pure" Gypsies being thought of as an originally Aryan racial group); in the rest of Europe, the Nazis murdered wandering Gypsy bands but generally left sedentary Gypsies unscathed. Some Gypsy tribes were protected; individual Gypsies living among the rest of the population were not hunted down; Himmler's order of November 15, 1943 for occupied Soviet areas stipulated that "sedentary Gypsies and part-Gypsies are to be treated as citizens of the country"; and many Gypsies served, albeit in the most horrifically dangerous assignments, in the Wehrmacht. Because of all this, most scholars have distinguished between the Nazi campaign against the Gypsies, an indescribable tragedy, and the Holocaust, the campaign to murder every single Jewish person. The scholarly journal published by Oxford University Press, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, recognizes this distinction in its title.

But distinctions are not the business of propagandists like Noam Chomsky. For him, everything must be reduced to pellets of ideology small enough to be ingested by—if I may be allowed to change the metaphor I used above—a discursive mouse. One may see this process at work in his construal of a passage in another article of mine which has set his febrile imagination ablaze.

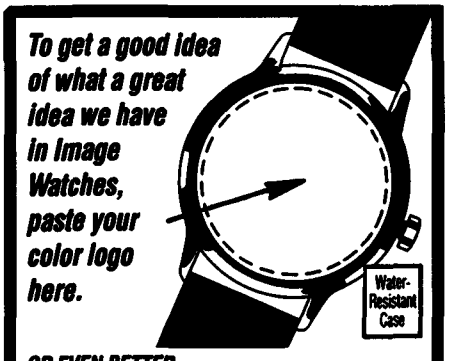
The passage, as any ordinarily attentive sixth-grader reading it would have recognized, was a paraphrase of a statement by Professor Ali Mazrui of SUNY, and read as follows:

> He [Mazrui] argues that the term "holocaust" should not be reserved to describe the Nazi murder of European Jewry but should "remain a general metaphor" embracing the oppression of American Indians and black slaves as well.

From this Mr. Chomsky infers (or pretends to) that by using the word "oppression," I was somehow denying the existence of black slavery and the persecution of American Indians. One might be tempted to say of this "interpretation" that no human being ever went lower for a proof, but in fact Mr. Chomsky's crony, the English dilettante Alexander Cockburn, in the August 17-24, 1992 issue of the *Nation*, expressed identical outrage at my use of the word "oppressed."

Whether Mr. Chomsky is indebted to Cockburn or Cockburn to Mr. Chomsky for this contemptible piece of flummery, I cannot say; but the two working in concert remind me of nothing so much as the Yiddish expression *tsvey meysim geyen tantsn* (two corpses are going to dance) to describe two persons of equal incompetence joining their talents in an enterprise for which they are entirely unsuited. (I did suggest to Cockburn, in a letter that the *Nation* printed after six months of resistance, that he take up—and this as soon as possible—his complaint about my [and Mazrui's] use of the word "oppression" with the authors of the old Negro spiritual that epitomizes the experience of slavery in the words, "oppressed so hard they could not stand.")

Like his hero, Noam Chomsky, Patrick O'Hayer prefers to deal with a non-issue—Deborah Lipstadt does not ever say that Chomsky supports Holocaust denial "as a fact"—rather than with the scandal of Chomsky's promotion of a petition riddled with falsehoods and his collaboration with Robert Faurisson and other anti-Semites and Nazis. When Pierre Vidal-Naquet learned, in 1979, that Chomsky was writing a preface to Faurisson's *Mémoire en Défense*, he warned his fellow leftist that Faurisson was a long-time, well-known anti-Semite. This did not prevent Chomsky from going ahead with his preface or from affixing to Faurisson the inane label: "a sort of apolitical liberal." When he was taken to task for referring in the petition to the "findings" that resulted from Faurisson's "historical research," Chomsky had the gall to claim that Frenchmen



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with imperfect English did not understand that "findings" means "conclusions" rather than "discoveries."

As I remarked in my review, Faurisson's right to teach was not withdrawn; neither was he, as the petition falsely claimed, denied access to public libraries and archives. The only important sense in which Chomsky's involvement with the Nazis concerns free speech is that, as everybody knows, Chomsky has a nasty habit of labeling all who disagree with him as enemies of freedom or (in my case) "some mullah of Qom." Vidal-Naquet suggests in his book that Chomsky's zeal on behalf of Faurisson is unlikely to cool until the French republic passes a law requiring that Faurisson's works be read in public schools and advertised and sold at the entrance to synagogues.

John C. Zimmerman's point about the similarity between Chomsky's apologetics for Pol Pot and the methods of the Holocaust deniers may remind us of a controversy of 1984 that sheds light on Chomsky's idiosyncratic idea of free speech. In an article in the *New Criterion* (October 1984), the British linguist (and political radical) Geoffrey Sampson recounted what had happened after he wrote in the English *Biographical Companion to Modern Thought* that Chomsky had "forfeited authority as a political commentator by a series of actions widely regarded as ill-judged (repeated polemics minimizing the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia; endorsement of a book . . . that denied the historical reality of the Jewish Holocaust)." Sampson was subsequently informed by the book's editors that Chomsky had threatened the publisher, Harper & Row, with a libel action if these words appeared in their American paperback edition of the book. When Sampson refused to mutilate his text, his entry was replaced by one which said only that Noam Chomsky "continued to be involved in controversy" (on unspecified issues).

By way of explaining how this act of censorship comported with his passionate devotion to the free speech of Nazis, Chomsky averred that "With regard to a book, readers can form their own conclusions. But an entry in a reference work is something quite different." As Werner Cohn, whose 1988 pamphlet on Chomsky is an indispensable complement to Lipstadt and Vidal-Naquet, acidly remarks: "Chomsky does not revoke his principle of absolute freedom of expression for everyone. It's just a matter of a little exception that he finds necessary." The little exception being, of course, the truth about himself.

I am greatly relieved that Michael McClain, after mental struggle, has concluded that he could not "honestly say that the . . . Holocaust never occurred." If he "seriously doubts" that Holocaust denial appears in PLO publications, let him consider the following: in 1990, the PLO weekly, *El Istiqlal*, published a series of articles denying the Holocaust. One declared that "the burning of the Jews in the Nazi chambers is the lie of the 20th century . . . the gas chambers would have had to operate for 1,300 years in order to burn six million Jews." In the same year, *Balsam*, the publication of the PLO-affiliated Palestinian Red Crescent, called the existence of Nazi gas chambers "a Jewish hoax to bilk money for Israel from Germany." I leave it to Mr. McClain to decide whether the Palestinian cause has now been tainted by "liars and willfully blind idiots."

Mr. McClain's translation of the word "*nakba*" as "ethnic cleansing" is, of course, incorrect; it has been used by Arabs to refer to the complex of events in 1948 that includes the establishment of the state of Israel, the failure of their armies to destroy that state, and the resultant refugee problem. But never mind. Since the Palestinian Arabs have long aspired to usurp the role of Jews and to appropriate Jewish symbols and Jewish history—the Arab "diaspora," the PLO "covenant," the Arab *Exodus* ship, the United Palestine Appeal—how could they possibly do without a Holocaust, even a second-class one involving refugee status, not death? Mr. McClain may want to suggest to the conjectural scholar who writes *Denying the Nakba* that he ask the Arab nations who brought about the Palestinian-Arab "Catastrophe" of 1948 to underwrite his research as a small act of contrition.

The Future of Democracy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Had Bruce D. Porter, in "Can American Democracy Survive?" [November 1993], looked longer at the evidence in pursuit of his question, he might have felt more alarm.

Mr. Porter cites "declining governability" as an incipient crisis, tracing it to budgetary and other economic problems, but he surprisingly concludes that these problems need not be destabilizing and may be "healthy." There is no mention, however, of even more troubling sources of a grave erosion of legitimacy that is fundamental to democratic governance: the growing recognition among ordinary people of routine lying and deception by the state; the deepening chasm of distrust of officialdom and of officials' explanations for their many failed promises and programs; the clientizing of citizens by remote and inaccessible bureaucracies. Loss of legitimacy is extremely serious (and hard to regain) because it strikes at essential allegiance, at respect for governing authority, and at the willingness of individuals and groups to cooperate without crude (and inefficient) coercion.

Mr. Porter's treatment of the "crisis of American values" is also disappointing, and not only because he attempts to dispose of it in a few paragraphs. . . . Conflict (or flight) of values has become a major issue in our country. The insults that provoke it are well known: the increase in lawlessness and violence; the essential nihilism of postmodern academic doctrines trickling down through the media; the bumptious selling of diversity/pluralism; the attempts of the pan-sexual bund to impose its ideas on schoolchildren in the guise of hygiene instruction—and more.

So now we hear admissions such as that recently published in a prominent liberal journal, "We made a mistake in ceding the family issue to the Right." Speechwriters in the White House have taken up the "politics of meaning"; the President now speaks of the "great crisis of spirit" and the importance of "values" and "soul." All this is more striking after years of his party's ideologues denouncing as sexist/racist any attempt to introduce such subjects. Presumably long-exiled values will now be rehabilitated and allowed back in the conversation. Small comfort! The language which once made possible moral and ethical discourse has so fallen into disuse that it has be-

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come as arcane as Welsh or Romansh; not quite extinct but moribund, covered over with a patchwork quilt of rights talk, emotivism, interests, motivations, demands, calculation, utilitarian preferences, appetites, and therapy chat.

Yes, we should be alarmed. Democracy will probably survive, but in hollowed-out forms of media-driven plebiscites. Worse, the Age of the Enlightenment is fading, coming to an end just as the Age of Myth and Faith closed out many years back, and we are now in a long transition—a Time of Disbelief and Unbelievability—moving (perhaps) toward some other age no one can yet name.

THOMAS FITZGERALD
Ann Arbor, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is nothing essentially to criticize in Bruce D. Porter's article, "Can American Democracy Survive?" But the superficiality makes it bland nourishment indeed. A review of the major ills currently besetting us is not what COMMENTARY has meant to me in twenty years of avidly devouring each issue. The magazine's excitement has always been to challenge us, the more or less well-read, if not necessarily intellectual, subscribers. This pallid and cautious discourse produces nothing more than what we are already only too aware of from even a casual perusal of media offerings.

Come on, Mr. Porter, take a stand! Tell us what you would do to make things right in this country. Tell us how you would handle our "new and serious challenges" from abroad, or our "failure to reduce the budget." Anyone can categorize our deficiencies. The moral relativism you disdain is a by-product of American democracy which is now evolving into an end-product. I grant that this form of government may be the best there is, but it also appears to be heading toward something which may be more than we bargained for.

Just what course would you have America take at this juncture? Neither liberal nor conservative administrations nor Congress seem willing to take risks by fully informing Americans of the economic abyss toward which we are heading and prodding them to swallow the bitter medicine required to avoid it. And for obvious reasons; it gets them where they breathe—in the voting booth. Unable to please all their constituencies, they shrink from antagonizing any of them. And so they are hamstrung—paralyzed. It is the great handicap of governing in a republic.

One point raised in the article did cause me some reflection—enough to reach a somber conclusion: unless and until a major crisis develops, foreign or domestic, Americans will not unite. And when they do, it is always almost too late and involves a great deal of pain. Unhappily, this is the price, I suppose, we pay for our way of life; and yet it seems the only way American democracy survives.

STANLEY P. KESSEL
Hollywood, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Bruce D. Porter, in a generally first-rate and thoughtful article, seems to make at least one point from a Washington perspective. He writes of "rising public resentment over the failure of Washington to address the deficit. . . ." But the deficit . . . is not the primary concern of the public, . . . and NAFTA, for all its press coverage, is far down the list of things keeping the average American awake at night. . . .

Aside from job creation, by all objective measurements the economy is improving. But a good part of the public does not notice a real difference. Being out of a job, or knowing someone out of a job, or being fearful of losing one's own job, can overcome mounds of economic data. Perception always wins out over reality. Americans fear they are losing control, that their lives are getting less secure, that government at all levels is powerless, or incompetent, to do anything. Unfortunate natural tendencies, conditioned by the Reagan-Bush "free-lunch" attitude toward taxes, cause many voters to deny any responsibility for this situation. . . . They see government as gutless, . . . and politicians concerned only with reelection. Yet officials like Jim Florio in New Jersey who try to show leadership are punished with defeat. . . .

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Elected officials, especially in Washington, see this. Faint-hearted they might be, but they are not stupid. . . . Increased voter anger leads to an increase in cautious political waffling which in turn increases voter anger. . . . Mr. Porter is right when he sees great problems now facing the country, though his analogy with the 1850's is probably exaggerated. . . . The national structure is strong; we endured the problems Mr. Porter mentions and, though there is no guarantee, it is reasonable to believe that we will endure and survive in the future. . . . But we need leadership. We must avoid lazy and feeble gimmicks like term limits, the current easy way out. Term limits allows voters to avoid having to make hard choices. . . . Besides, a way to limit terms already exists. Perhaps for the wrong reasons, Florio in New Jersey and David Dinkins in New York had their terms quite effectively limited. We need to tell our elected officials at all levels, no more pandering—we demand leadership now. We need to tell them that we will pay for good government, but we had damn well better get it.

BRUCE L. BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

BRUCE D. PORTER writes:

When I wrote "Will American Democracy Survive?," I anticipated that critics of the article would brand me an alarmist and charge me with exaggerating the defects of American democracy. It is, therefore, with an odd sense of gratification, bordering on bewilderment, that I find myself confronted by critics whose main objection seems to be that I have *understated* the case for a crisis in American democracy. I plead guilty. I did understate the case, deliberately, believing that a discussion of any event so calamitous as the possible collapse of a great democracy called for a measure of rhetorical restraint. If that resulted in some readers feeling I was being too cautious, even bland, so be it. I agree with Thomas Fitzgerald, nonetheless, that my article might have profited from a fuller exposition of what I called "the crisis of American values," but space considerations unfortunately precluded it. As he rightly points out, that crisis is at the heart of what ails the American polity today.

Stanley P. Kessel complains that the problems of which I wrote are obvious from "even a casual perusal of media offerings." This may be true for readers of COMMENTARY, but unfortunately it is not at all the case with our society or media at large; efforts to criticize the fragmentation of our society or its abandonment of moral values are still too often dismissed as racist, reactionary, or right-wing, none of which they need necessarily be. As for Mr. Kessel's assertion that I did not take a stand, he is quite wrong. I took a very clear stand. But what I did not do is offer a *prescription*, which is what he is looking for. I simply believe that an accurate prognosis must precede any search for solutions. If it was presumptuous to postulate a systemic-wide crisis of American democracy in a few pages, it would have been even more presumptuous to propose solutions in the same space—much less in this brief reply.

Americans are typically fascinated with quick fixes and legislative solutions, yet I fear there is no simple *political* solution to the crisis that faces us—not term limits, not balanced-budget amendments, not welfare or taxation or educational or health-care reform. The crisis we face has political ramifications, of course, but it is not fundamentally political in nature. It derives, rather, from the erosion of the moral and spiritual foundation of our society, and it can only be addressed by vigorous efforts to rebuild that foundation. It is time we faced the truth that an ineffectual Congress, a vacillating administration, and a generation of timid and unimaginative politicians are not the cause of our problems. They are only a symptom of what ails us all.

Physics vs. Metaphysics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to respond to Jeffrey Marsh's "Physics vs. Metaphysics" [November 1993]. First, Mr. Marsh misdescribes Steven Weinberg's expectation that a final theory of physics will be developed by calling it "Platonism" or the result of a "desperate need." It is, rather, merely an example of the optimism with which every successful scientist pursues his work. It is unlikely that Weinberg will fall into depression or despair if his hope for a "theory of everything" is not realized.

Physicists do not observe design in nature or assume it in their theories. They observe order. Order and design are not synonyms. One cannot, by definition, have design without a designer, i.e., an agent (human or superhuman) who plans and intends to bring about a result. The same is not true of order, and it is the inference from order to design that needs justification. So far, attempts to provide that justification have failed.

The physicist Bryan Appleyard, whose views Mr. Marsh apparently endorses, seems to be one of those romantics who envision a golden age, a time when moral sensibilities had not yet been corrupted by science. It is difficult to determine . . . just when that happy state prevailed, but the assumption of a golden age does have its attractions for those who sermonize upon the sins of society. It is likely, however, that less respectable motives often underlie the denigration of science. Modern science, especially physics, is abstract and difficult, and its reliance upon esoteric mathematics guarantees that relatively few people will have the inclination or ability to comprehend it. This creates resentment, especially among literary intellectuals who envy the prestige of scientists and the financial support they receive. . . . Another and more traditional cause of resentment is that science does not, and cannot, support a belief in a supernaturally established scheme of things in which each person is important and in which his heart's desires will, in the long run, be satisfied.

Will . . . Mr. Marsh please explain the difference between questions of value and questions of ultimate value? And . . . truth versus ultimate truth? It is true that snow is white and the Holocaust occurred during World War II; what additional information is conveyed by saying that these statements are "ultimately" true? Perhaps those who want ultimate truth are really asking for logical necessity under a misleading label. If so, they can find it in logic and pure mathematics, but nowhere else.

It is a caricature of modern physics to claim that all of the entities that occur in its theories are, or should be, observable. No one has ever seen a quantum-mechanical psi function or an electric-field vector, and no one ever will. Even a particle such as a neutrino can be observed only in the sense that

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its presence is detected through complex inferences based on theory. An experimenter actually sees nothing except instrument readings, tracks in bubble chambers, and the like.

Appleyard's most bizarre claim is that the popularity of pseudoscience—he mentions food faddism and other nostrums peddled by hucksters and cultists—is somehow attributable to science itself. No doubt an explanation in terms of human ignorance and gullibility would not serve his purposes.

DAVID A. SHOTWELL
Alpine, Texas

JEFFREY MARSH writes:

David A. Shotwell correctly characterizes Steven Weinberg's approach to physics as optimistic and points out that the existence of some of the entities in physical theories is inferred rather than observed directly. But I used the terms "Platonic" and "desperate" for Weinberg's final theory because it relies on a far greater degree of inference than is normally the case. As the physicist David Lindley, whom I quoted in my article, says, "[The] theory of everything . . . can be neither tested nor disproved."

I must confess an inability to draw a clear distinction, as Mr. Shotwell does, between "order" and "design." He would say that a portrait of a man shows design because it was painted by an artist, but it would seem that the existence of the artist himself provides evidence only of order, not design.

When I wrote of Bryan Appleyard's belief that popular acceptance of scientific modes of thought has delegitimized the consideration of questions of ultimate value that are not subject to measurement, I had in mind such subjects as the meaning of human life, which some people consider particularly important. I think it appropriate to use the term "ultimate truths" to refer to the answers to such questions and Mr. Shotwell seems to agree that science does not provide these answers.

It is certainly plausible, as Mr. Shotwell maintains, that some literary intellectuals denigrate science because of envy, but it is irrelevant to anything I wrote. And, to carp a little, those unscientific souls who accept a "supernaturally established scheme of things in which each person is important" do not assume that their "heart's desires will, in the long run, be satisfied." They believe that such a happy outcome occurs only for people willing to make a very serious effort to control their desires and behavior.

Culture and Capitalism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein mars an otherwise perceptive article, "Culture and Capitalism" [November 1993], by an astonishingly poor understanding of what he calls "capitalistic theorizing." He writes: "A strict capitalist, the economic equivalent of a fundamentalist in religion, might argue that the inability of art forms to survive in the marketplace is the best indicator that they probably do not deserve to survive." Of course, he offers no suggestion as to what is the best indicator of artistic survival. Is it his judgment or someone else's? And who is to be given this role? Capitalist theory answers these questions by saying that private individuals should have the freedom to purchase the goods and services they desire within the limits of social (legal) acceptability. The corollary to this proposition is that individuals should have the freedom *not* to purchase what they do not desire. I am saddened by the fact that more people want to buy the services of an entertainer or athlete than want to buy my services as an economics professor. But I believe that correcting this situation would involve a serious infringement of human freedom.

Mr. Epstein is right, therefore, that a . . . capitalist would leave the decision of determining what is deserving in art to the marketplace. He becomes confused, however, when he asserts that "Fortunately, despite capitalist theorizing, this is rarely the way that the most successful capitalists have traditionally behaved." In support of this assertion, he notes the enormous cultural contributions of the robber barons. . . . But in what way are their contributions inconsistent with capitalist theorizing? These men acquired their wealth by furnishing goods and services that individuals voluntarily bought. Mr. Epstein implies that the inconsistency lies in the way the robber barons disposed of their wealth. Does he believe that capitalist theory requires that the wealth of the rich be spent on useless luxuries rather than on works of art? Does he believe that charitable or cultural contributions violate the canon of capitalism? If Mr. Epstein believes these things, he is sadly mistaken. According to capitalism, strict or otherwise, the disposition as well as the acquisition of wealth is to be left to the free choice of private individuals.

Another point that eludes Mr. Epstein is that worthwhile art does tend to survive. The works of art that adorn our great museums were purchased in the marketplace. Though Mr. Epstein notes that the big contributors to museums had cultural limitations, he forgets that they relied on experts . . . to select the art for them. . . . It is a fact, therefore, that the Renoirs, Rembrandts, and Van Goghs did survive under "strict capitalism" while the Mapplethorpes and Serranos . . . are able to survive only in the bureaucratic marketplace.

DAVID L. SHAPIRO
Scottsdale, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Notwithstanding the subtle reasoning and abiding good sense of Joseph Epstein, both of which are evident in his article, it seems to me that his larger point about our rapidly declining culture . . . is poorly explored from the hoary, cold-war perspective of a capitalist/socialist confrontation. . . .

Granted there is some timeliness in analyzing this face-off as it exists in our current culture—to stand up for the superiority of the capitalist virtues of freedom, risk, individualism, and experimentation as against the coddling security and repressive saddling of expression that occurs under socialism, particularly as the National Endowment for the Arts and the "voices of entitlement" from the Left seek to impose such an agenda.

However, . . . the question is not whether capitalism is culturally superior to socialism, but how to keep capitalism in its place so that its unbridled ethos and mindset do not destroy those other virtues and institutions that are essential for safeguarding its own health and for maintaining our civilization. . . .

To the extent that capitalism proceeds bereft of these higher considerations—where people are

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preeminently motivated by their appetites and calculating impulses—society becomes progressively cynical, debased, and mercurial; culture and civilization decline across the board. We can see this in our own time in how desire unchained and a calculating "contract" mentality have eroded the institution of the family; how in the realm of smaller-case culture, the free-agent system has barbarized and eroded the institutional integrity of major-league sports; and, finally, in an example closer to Mr. Epstein's article, how in the case of higher culture the commercialized cult of the superstar and blockbuster debases the appreciation of great art by linking it to the aura of spectacle and celebrity, and how in the process art itself becomes overwrought and pretentious (or, alternately, crude and nihilistic).

That America, if not fully there yet, is nonetheless moving headlong and at a rapid pace in this very baleful direction is the cause of our current uneasiness. And we need to recognize the role that the darker side of capitalism . . . plays in this. . . . From a critical perspective, the first positive step we can take to . . . revitalize our culture is to revive that even longer-standing critique of capitalism from the Right: from Goethe, Tocqueville, Emerson, and Matthew Arnold—and from more contemporary figures like Vladimir Nabokov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (both of whom Mr. Epstein cites as implacable enemies of socialism), and Irving Kristol. These people have not sought to bury capitalism but rather to temper it. . . . For however varied they are in other respects, all of them have clearly seen how capitalism inverts the classic hierarchy of the soul—placing material desire at its summit above both wisdom and heroism. . . . The urgent challenge for us today is how to rectify that balance.

LEONARD BAKKER
Berkeley, California

Chi An

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Chi An, the heroine of Steven W. Mosher's *A Mother's Ordeal: One Woman's Fight Against China's One-Child Policy*, is not a monster, according to reviewer William McGurn [Books in Review, October 1993]. "Rather, she is an ordinary human being whose own survival, like the survival of those around her, depended on her deadening the normal impulse to empathy and decency." That was true of the Chi An who enforced China's one-child policy after the death of Chairman Mao. She was indeed a "participant-turned-victim," as Mr. McGurn describes her.

But what about the Chi An who "reports the rush of pride she felt when she slapped the president of her college during a public 'struggle session'"? When Chairman Mao was alive, his supporters did not deaden their impulses; they enjoyed every minute of their violence. It would not be unjust to call Chi An a participant-turned-monster, bearing in mind that monsters can be victims, too.

Two minor points: first, the Chinese character for "good" is not "a son and a daughter," as Mr. McGurn writes, but a woman and a child; traditional Chinese culture did not consider sons and daughters equally good. Second, while *mei*, which means "beautiful," can sometimes mean "American" in compound nouns (*mei-yuan* means "American dollar," for example), the Chinese word for America itself is *Meiguo*, which not only means "beautiful country" but also sounds like "America."

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

WILLIAM MCGURN writes:

George Jochnowitz raises an interesting point. I suppose how we regard Chi An depends on how we regard human nature. Pascal wrote that man was neither beast nor angel. But it does seem more accurate to describe man as *both* beast and angel. In the case of Chi An, whatever else we might say, certainly she was ordinary. The Cultural Revolution shows what even ordinary people are capable of when traditional civilizing structures, which temper our baser inclinations, are removed or enervated. The horrible legacy of Communist rule in China is that it will have systematically destroyed all the structures and institutions it had inherited from the past without leaving anything in its wake.

Mr. Jochnowitz is absolutely right about the character for good, which was an editorial slip on my part; I had meant to say mother and child. Indeed, one untold tragedy of China's one-child policy is that it has forced the abortion of millions of baby girls solely on the basis of their sex—something that does not seem of interest to the American feminist movement. As for the baby's name, much in Chinese depends on what names sound like and how they are used, as Mr. Jochnowitz notes. And Chi An makes her intentions clear in the book:

> I smile anew at the name [my husband] and I have chosen for our daughter, for it is more than just a name. We have named her Mei, which is the way we Chinese say America, the land of her birth. It is a Chinese blessing bestowed on her birthplace.

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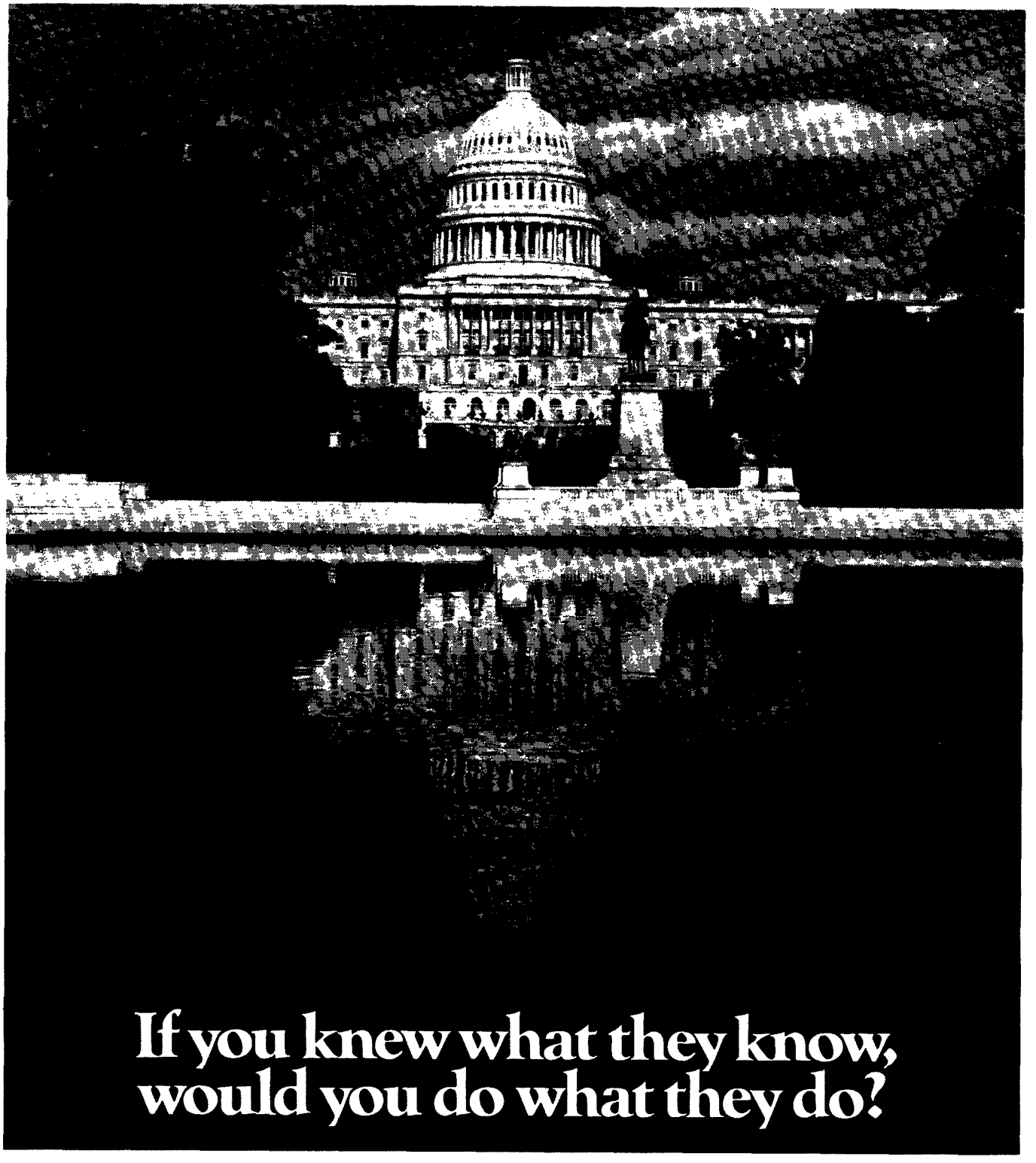

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What Health-Care Crisis?

Irwin M. Stelzer

THE devil, we are often told, is in the details. When appraising public-policy proposals, look not at the broad caption—"gun control," "reinventing government," "deficit reduction"—but at the minutiae of the legislation aimed at achieving the unexceptionable goal. Therein will the true strengths, or weaknesses, of the proposed policy be revealed.

In accordance with this injunction, the debate over President Clinton's proposals for reforming our health-care system has been dominated by "experts" and policy wonks who, like the President himself, are never so happy as when they are poring over statistics and the details of this or that new arrangement. The net effect has been to confine discussion to the comparative merits of the Clinton plan as against the single-payer option espoused by certain Democrats, or the four or five other rival reforms espoused by other Democrats or Republicans.

Lost in all this has been the large question of whether a massive transformation of our health-care system is in truth either necessary or desirable. And discussion of *that* question has been inhibited, and even for all practical purposes silenced, by the fact that the main participants in the debate—the politicians—have, for fear of seeming callous, accepted the unexamined assumptions that there is a great "crisis" in health care, and that our system is radically flawed and desperately needs to be overhauled.

Therefore I do not propose to analyze the details of Clinton's plan. They will in any event be altered, perhaps beyond recognition, as the bill wends its way through a skeptical Congress. Instead, I wish to ask whether there is something that can legitimately be called a crisis in the provision of health care in America, a crisis so severe as to dictate a thoroughgoing transformation of our system and one which will inevitably involve, at the very least, a huge expansion of government control over a significant sector of our lives and of the American economy.

The idea that there is such a crisis stems, it would appear, from four sources. The first is the insecurity generated by the most recent recession. Most Americans' health insurance is linked to their jobs, with employers paying about 86 percent of the total cost: lose your job, lose your coverage; get a new job and you might not get coverage if you have a health problem. During a period of rising unemployment, enough Americans found this prospect sufficiently unsettling to create a constituency for changes in the way health-insurance coverage is maintained.

Then there is the concern over costs. Already claiming 14 percent of our gross national product—a figure high by international standards—health-care costs have also been rising. Many people have convinced themselves that unless something is done, health care will consume an ever-larger share of GNP, leading in the end to the impoverishment of America.

Additional pressure for reform comes from the notion that *everyone*—no exceptions—should have health insurance as a matter of right. Since somewhere between 37 and 39 million Americans are now widely said to be without coverage, the system must be failing and it must be revamped to provide insurance for all.

A fourth contributor to the sense of crisis is the well-documented liberal bias of the major media. This factor helps to explain one of the great anomalies in the health-care debate: although 75 percent of Americans have been persuaded that there is a crisis (32 percent say the system "needs fundamental changes," and 47 percent that it "needs to be completely rebuilt"), 80 percent simultaneously report *themselves* as "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with the quality and cost of their own health care. "This contradiction," writes Fred Barnes in the premiere issue of *Forbes MediaCritic*, "can be attributed to the media-generated myths that have shaped America's view of its health-care system."

All this has added up to a great political opportunity for the Democrats. The President's advisers have long been telling him that the Democrats have no future as the party of the poor because the middle-class majority has had its fill of income transfers to what it sees as excessively prolific welfare mothers and ghetto youngsters who prefer looting to learning. To wed the middle

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class to the Democrats, to prevent the reemergence of the blue-collar Reagan Democrat, the party needs a modern version of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Social Security system. Enter health-care reform.

Unfortunately for the President's political strategists, however, the crisis on which the case for this reform rests—unlike the Depression of the 30's which made Social Security possible—can be shown to be a synthetic one, and the intended beneficiaries (i.e., middle-class Americans) its biggest losers.

TAKE the much-heralded 14-percent figure. The approximately $940 billion Americans spent on health care in 1993 did indeed represent a bit more than 14 percent of the nation's total output of goods and services. By what standard is that too much? Three are generally offered: other nations spend less; in the past we ourselves spent less; and the results we get do not justify the amount of money we put in.

But international comparisons—to begin with them—are notoriously flawed. First of all, we are the richest nation in the world, with more houses, cars, telephones, toilets, parks, and other amenities than most other nations can even imagine. As such, we cannot be expected to deploy increments of our rising incomes in the same way as do, say, the Japanese, 54 percent of whom in the average-income bracket still lack indoor toilet facilities (whereas only 1.8 percent of America's *poor* are without such facilities). If we prefer to devote a larger portion of our incomes to top-quality health care, what is wrong with that?

After all, we do not settle for the housing standards that prevail in poorer countries: we insist on central heating and air-conditioning, the latter now installed in nearly half of the homes of even those we classify as poor. Nor are tiny cars with mechanical clutches, common elsewhere, the stuff of which the American dream is made. Neither is spartan health care. Hence we afford ourselves the luxury of making much greater use than other countries do of expensive diagnostic techniques like CAT scans and ultrasound tests.

Another reason why international comparisons mean little is that they give no weight to differences in the quality of service. The *Congressional Quarterly* cites the fact that "Japan's government plays a much greater role in private health-care delivery than does the U.S. government" to explain how "Japan keeps its costs considerably lower than those of the United States." No mention of what Fred Barnes calls "Japanese . . . assembly-line treatment from doctors who see an average of 49 patients a day," and who perform gynecological examinations on scores of women assembled in a single nonprivate room, as physicians scramble to maintain incomes in the face of too-low per-capita reimbursements.

Such stringent government controls on physicians' fees do succeed in lowering the recorded cost of Japanese medical care. But because payment is based on patient visits, the doctor keeps the average length of each visit to five minutes, and the Japanese on average make twelve visits per year, or about three times as many as Americans, whose average visit length is fifteen to twenty minutes. These decreases in convenience for patients, and increases in patient time and travel costs, points out Patricia Danzon of the Wharton School, "are excluded from the national health accounts and from public visibility."

International cost comparisons also ignore queuing and other forms of rationing that reduce recorded costs by forcibly limiting the availability of the service. Like consumer goods in the old Soviet Union, medical services in many of the countries with which America's reformers invidiously compare the U.S. are cheap but hard to get.

Joseph White, a Brookings Institution researcher whose comparison of America's system with those of six other nations leads him to conclude that "America's health-care system must be reformed," nevertheless concedes that "Britain has restricted capacity severely and makes people wait much longer for services that Americans would consider necessary, than we would accept." Certainly, the British rule that patients over fifty-five are not eligible for kidney dialysis would not be acceptable here.

We further discover from White that Australia faces both availability restrictions and "spiraling costs," and that there are "stirrings of dissatisfaction" in France. On the other hand, he dismisses Canada's waiting lists as the result of "unexpected increases in demand . . . [rather] than . . . intentional constraints on capacity."

Here White shows no recognition that the shortages caused by government planning and operation are *often* "unintentional"—planners, immunized from the consequences of the shortages they create by preferential access to goods and services (did a Kremlin bureaucrat ever queue for anything?), rarely match demand and supply with any precision. And Canada's recent response to unbearable cost increases—a reduction in the services covered—passes without mention in White's analysis. Nor does he tell us what we learn from Patricia Danzon, who notes that Canadian physicians "work fewer hours as [government-mandated] expenditure ceilings are approached," thereby shifting the risks and costs of waiting for care to patients—and lowering the recorded cost of health care in Canada. This is not a trivial matter in a country in which 1.4 million people are waiting for medical service, and 45 percent of those queuing up for surgery say they are "in pain."

Japan, writes White, "has not yet experienced significant complaints about waiting lists." But

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that silence may well be due more to stoic acceptance of shortages than to their absence. As for Germany, it achieves its low costs by limiting malpractice suits; by eschewing extraordinary life-prolonging measures for those judged to be terminally ill; by buying fewer pieces of high-technology equipment than Americans typically use; and by price controls. Even so, costs are soaring and the German insurance funds are broke, despite premiums that come to 13 percent of payrolls.

YET another reason why international comparisons are misleading is that they omit societal attitudes. A prominent British physician described to me how decisions are reached in that country about whether to expend resources in an effort to save a seriously damaged newborn, or to let nature take its course. A hospital staff conference, a quiet meeting with the parents, a decision. In America, in similar circumstances, draconian efforts would be made to prolong the child's life. So, too, at other stages of life, including extreme old age.

Indeed, it is the very success of these efforts that contributes to the high cost of health care: the dead are no burden to the system; survivors are. The high expenditures incurred thereby do not result from the greed of doctors (real earnings of American doctors have remained constant for the past fifteen years), or the inefficiency of hospitals, or the swollen profits of insurers, or the price-gouging of drug companies. Rather, they reflect a basic American value—mistaken in the view of certain health-policy experts but deeply held: damn the costs, save lives, and use expensive technologies whenever necessary.

Thus, in an interview with the *New York Times*, Dr. William Castelli, the director of the Framingham Heart Study (which has been tracking cardiovascular disease in that Massachusetts town since 1949) observes:

> Since the early 1970's, . . . there has been nearly a 40-percent drop in the death rate from heart attacks and a 58-percent decline in the death rate from strokes in the United States. But the rate at which people suffer heart attacks and strokes has not fallen to a comparable degree. . . . Most people who get heart attacks and strokes don't die. They live. This is how our country is going broke, paying for the bypass operations, angioplasties, and truckloads of medicines needed to keep people with cardiovascular diseases alive.

His colleague, Dr. William B. Kannell, adds: "Right now, we're salvaging more and more people with coronary disease who, instead of dying, are living to develop heart failure . . . , leading to numerous costly hospitalizations and nursing-home care."

These ultimately expensive life-extending techniques are not forced on patients by doctors in love with their high-tech toys and insensitive to the fact that an estimated 30 percent of our health-care costs are incurred in the last six months of patients' lives. Ezekiel Emanuel, an oncologist and medical ethicist at the Harvard Medical School, points out that fewer than one out of ten physicians surveyed would put "Grandma" on a respirator if she had a stroke, whereas 40 percent of family members would.

High health-care costs in America also reflect another distinctive feature of our society—the social pathology of our underclass. None other than President Clinton pointed this out to an assembly of doctors at Johns Hopkins: "We'll never get the cost of health care down to where it is in other countries as long as we have higher rates of teen pregnancies and higher rates of low-birth-weight births and higher rates of AIDS, and, most important of all, higher rates of violence." And, he might have added, nothing in his own health-care plan addresses any of those problems.

Because other nations do not have as many crack babies, or bullet-riddled drug pushers, or members of urban gangs as we do, they spend less on health care. America's relatively high level of medical expenditures on these problems is no more due to faults in our health-care system than Alaska's relatively high expenditure on heating oil is due to inefficient furnaces. Nor would changing our health-care system help, as the following report in the pro-Clinton *New York Times* vividly suggests:

> In Washington, a sullen young woman named Margaret Williams was dragging her toddler into a medical van. He was more than a year behind on his vaccination shots.
>
> She had no job. She had no husband. She explained in disgust that she had no time to hassle with the social workers and the Medicaid forms that would have given her son free care.
>
> "They want you to run around, and do this or that for nothing," she said. In the meantime, her son had got rickets.

The costs Williams and her offspring will eventually impose on the health-care system will most likely prove significant. And no reform of the system itself will avoid that cost. Which means that the staggering health problems of the urban underclass provide no justification for a radical change in how we deliver health services. If anything, the opposite is true. Since it is a government-administered system—welfare—that is a major contributor to these problems, the case of Margaret Williams would seem to provide a compelling argument against turning the private health-care industry over to the kinds of bureaucracies that have established their incompetence in related fields.

Yet even if international comparisons were cor-

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rected to account for all these factors, what would they tell us? America spends more per student on higher education than any other country in the world—$13,000 per year as against $6,000-$7,000 for 24 advanced-industrial nations. Do the academics who feel our per-capita health-care costs should be brought into line with those of other countries feel the same way about our outlays for higher education? If so, perhaps they would like to begin by capping academic salaries.

THE second basis of comparison offered to support the contention that we are spending too much on health care is our own past. In 1960 we devoted 5 percent of GNP to health care; by 1993 we were up to the famous 14 percent. Yet we do not compare the price of a modern automobile—with automatic transmission, heating, air-conditioning, and stereo tape and CD decks, plus safety features including seat belts, air bags, ABS brakes, and crash-resistant design—with the price of a model-T Ford, and then complain about how much more the new car sells for. So why ignore quality changes in medical care? Indeed, ignoring such quality changes leads to a particularly serious misrepresentation of true costs where medical treatment is concerned.

Most people beyond the age of Washington's current crop of experts can remember when an operation to remove cataracts resulted in a hospital stay of two to four days and an even longer recuperative period at home. That surgery is now typically done on an outpatient basis. Again, as Dr. Ira Cohen, formerly chief of the Division of General Medicine at New York City's Beth Israel hospital, tells us, in the days when the electrocardiogram was the sole diagnostic tool, the victim of a heart attack could count on a four- to six-week hospital stay; now, improved diagnostic techniques and equipment replace guesswork with information about the extent of muscle damage and other problems, permitting the doctor to discharge the typical heart patient in a week or ten days. Or again, a gall-bladder laparoscopy costs roughly 20 percent more than surgical removal, but a hospital stay of perhaps a week is replaced by an outpatient procedure or an overnight stay, and three weeks off the job by about three to five days. Similarly with kidney-stone operations, where the widespread use of extracorporeal shock-wave lithotripsy has also been making surgery unnecessary, cutting the time in lost work to one-tenth of what it used to be.

Yet, astonishingly, the savings in lost wages nowhere appear in our accounting of trends in health-care costs. Nor do we have any way of measuring the savings in suffering and lost output that result from the higher medical outlays these new techniques often entail. If we did, we might find that health-care costs, properly measured, have not risen as much or as rapidly as the unadjusted data suggest.

Nor, so far as the future is concerned, can we credit the projections that bring us from 14 to 26 percent of GNP by 2030. Such projections all assume that recent trends in health-care prices and in the volume of services consumed will continue indefinitely. But this is unlikely. First, the health-care industry, circa 1994, is offering an unprecedented range of new products, from diagnostic tools to treatments. Like most new products, they will go through a cycle of rapid growth, followed by falling prices and costs as competition among suppliers emerges, consumers become more discriminating, and cost-saving production and application techniques are developed.

In addition, if faced with the costs of their decisions, consumers might adjust. Failure to acknowledge such elasticity of demand is what produced the forecasts that led President Carter to proclaim an "energy crisis." But instead of trebling to $100 per barrel, real oil prices have fallen by more than half, as consumers have learned to conserve and to use other, less expensive fuels.

SO MUCH, then, for the contentions that international comparisons and cost trends demonstrate that we spend too much on health care. What of the argument that our expenditures seem excessive when stacked up against results?

It is, of course, difficult to gauge just what "bang" we get for our health-care "buck." But the most commonly used standards are infant mortality and life expectancy, and by those America does badly: we seem to buy less life with more money than do other countries. For example, both Canada (10 percent) and Britain (6 percent) spend far less on health care than we do, but life expectancy at birth is higher, and infant mortality lower, in those countries.

Leave aside important questions about the comparability of these figures, and concentrate instead on the implicit assumption that these differences are attributable solely to differences in the efficiencies of the various health-care systems. To accept that hypothesis is to ignore all other influences—in the case of life expectancy, the fact that motor-vehicle deaths per 1,000 population are 28 percent higher in the United States than in Canada, and the fact that Americans consume 20 percent more cholesterol-laden beef and veal than do our neighbors to the north. Not to mention the effect on our longevity figures of the frighteningly high rate of homicide among young blacks.

As for infant mortality, Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute shows conclusively that the low ranking of the U.S. is attributable to our higher illegitimacy rates (since unwed mothers of all races and in all income groups

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are more likely to give birth to low-weight babies). Add the disinclination of black women to avail themselves of prenatal care even when it is easily available and free, and the result is an infant-mortality rate that cannot be blamed on the structure of the health-care system.

In short, against the risks inherent in a radical transformation of that system, we cannot expect as probable benefits longer lives and increased infant-survival rates. Those goals *are* achievable, but only by major changes in the way Americans live—i.e., by driving, smoking, eating, and shooting less, and marrying more—and in a welfare system that, unlike our health-care system, has a proven record of failure.

Before leaving this discussion of costs, we should keep in mind an important admonition, offered by Robert Reischauer, director of the Congressional Budget Office:

> The conviction that health-care costs are too high, are rising too rapidly, and are creating undesirable repercussions is a major impetus driving health-care reform. But we also care about access and the continuity of insurance coverage; about the quality and quantity of care we receive; about consumer choice; about our ready access to state-of-the-art treatments, and the pace at which medical technology advances; even about the amenities that have little or no impact on health outcomes.

Which is to say that "costs are not everything." A society as affluent as ours properly insists that noneconomic considerations, including steady progress in the use of expensive technologies that reduce suffering, be given weight.

IF THERE is no crisis in health-care costs, is there one in insurance coverage? Here we come to the second major statistic driving the health-care debate: at some point in 1991, the last year for which comprehensive data are available, 37 million people were without medical insurance. (This figure rose to 38.9 million in 1992, a year of relatively high unemployment, and one for which detailed data of the sort used below are not yet available.)

Note: these citizens are *not* denied health care, nor do they expire on the steps of hospitals because they cannot produce proof of insurance coverage. For hospital emergency rooms provide care to all comers. In fact, nonprofit hospitals, which constitute 88 percent of those in the U.S., cannot legally turn away any patient needing medical care, or unreasonably deny access to all the modern technology hospitals have available. And not just for the duration of the emergency: the hospital that sets a broken arm for an uninsured patient is obliged to see the treatment through. The care may not be luxurious, but neither is it casual. Per-capita health-care spending on the uninsured, pre-Medicare population is about 60 percent of per-capita expenditures on the insured population—a level sumptuous by the standards of other industrial countries.

Nonetheless, if the 37-million figure did mean what it is often taken to mean—that 15 percent (some estimates are as high as 17.4 percent) of our population lives with the unnerving and continual threat of being unable to pay for medical care—there would certainly be grounds for revising the way we provide medical services.

Fortunately, there is less of a problem here than meets the eye. Some of the uninsured are between jobs; some are students entering the labor market. Katherine Swartz, a specialist in health-care statistics at the Harvard University School of Public Health, points out that most of the uninsured are uninsured for only a short period of time. "Almost half of all uninsured spells end within six months and only about 15 percent of all uninsured spells last more than two years," she told *Congressional Quarterly*. The chronically-uninsured group in our society, then, numbers closer to 5.5 million than 37 million people.

And probably fewer than 5.5 million. For not all Americans without insurance find that condition imposed upon them. Only 1 percent of those under the age of sixty-five are uninsurable, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute. More than half of the uninsured are members of families headed by full-time workers; 40 percent of the uninsured have incomes in excess of $20,000, and 10 percent have incomes in excess of $50,000; only 29 percent are below the poverty level. And those with incomes below $20,000 spend several times as much on entertainment, alcohol, and tobacco as they do on health care, which, says Nicholas Eberstadt, they seem "to treat . . . as an optional but dispensable luxury good." Furthermore, 37 percent of the uninsured are under the age of twenty-five, a generally healthy group—the University of Michigan's Catherine McLaughlin calls them "the young invincibles"—for whom health insurance is often not a cost-effective buy.

If we put all this together—the 15 percent of the uninsured without coverage for two years, plus some who are uninsured for a shorter time, minus those who choose to be uninsured—we come up with a figure of perhaps 3 percent of the population who—although able to obtain health care—cannot obtain affordable health insurance. The policy question thus becomes: should we perform radical surgery on our health-care system for the sake of that 3 percent?

Before answering with a resounding No, we have to consider the possibility that when the uninsured are treated in a hospital, and cannot pay, the cost of that treatment is loaded onto the rest of us. Hence, says the President, we should get behind a scheme that provides universal cov-

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erage, and then hospital charges to the now-insured will decline.

This view may well be wrong. It assumes that hospitals subsidize nonpayers by charging paying customers more than they otherwise would—an assumption that is questioned by, among others, Michael Morrisey of the Department of Health Care Organization and Policy at the University of Alabama. But even if cross-subsidization from the insured to the uninsured does occur—even if, in other words, the uninsured do put a burden on the insured—the cure is simple: subsidize insurance for the truly poor, and compel payment by the voluntarily uninsured. This would be far less risky than an overhaul of the entire system.

WE ARE left, finally, with a relatively simple set of choices. Everyone agrees that any scheme that would turn 14 percent of the economy over to what the *Economist* calls "a rickety apparatus of new bureaucracies" should be instituted only in response to a major breakdown in the private sector. The proponents of a radical overhaul claim that such a breakdown has occurred. But they are mistaken.

As we have seen, costs are tolerable, all things considered, and results are not unsatisfactory: as Senator Christopher Bond of Missouri observes, kings and sheikhs come here for treatment. And if we compare our private system with the Veterans Health Administration, which is already run by the government, the case against a lurch toward greater state control becomes even stronger. VA patients in need of such care as cardiac or orthopedic diagnosis often wait 60 to 90 days to see a specialist, and months more for surgery. And 55 percent of patients with routine problems wait three hours or longer to be examined for a few minutes by what former Congressman and VA attorney Robert Bauman describes as "an overworked doctor struggling with increasing numbers of patients and piles of government forms, regulations, controls, and policy directives." Is this the direction in which we want to go?

There are, to be sure, reforms that could and should be made within the context of our present system. In addition to subsidizing those who are involuntarily uninsured, the most important is to make coverage "portable," so that the temporary loss of a job does not deprive a worker of his insurance. Such tweaks to the system would certainly help. But even more certainly, they would avoid the disastrous consequences in store for us if we follow the Clintons down the path to a health-care system presided over by a series of government boards inevitably staffed by the same people who are already doing such a wonderful job delivering our mail.

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Against the New Pessimism

Francis Fukuyama

THE end of the cold war has brought about a remarkable consensus between former hawks and doves—at least those professionally involved in some fashion with international affairs, whether they be journalists, academics, or politicians—to the effect that the world has become a much worse place since the demise of the Soviet Union. The pessimistic analysis runs roughly as follows:

In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, everyone was filled with euphoria over the collapse of Communism and believed that the entire world was turning to democracy. But this expectation proved extraordinarily naive: the collapse of Communism led not to democracy but to the unleashing of virulent nationalism and/or religious passion. Now, about four years later, we see that the world is not progressing toward the "global village" but retreating into atavistic tribalism, whose ugliest expression is the "ethnic cleansing" witnessed in Bosnia.

Nor, according to the pessimistic account, is the former Yugoslavia an isolated case. Rather, Yugoslavia demonstrates that modernity is a very thin veneer indeed; what has happened there portends the resurgence of ethnic passions throughout Eastern Europe and the former USSR. And not just in that region. Even among the apparently stable democracies of Western Europe, attacks on foreign residents and immigrants are just the tip of a larger racist iceberg.

Our international institutions, by this same account, are woefully inadequate to the job of maintaining global order. The United Nations, which many people hoped would become far more effective after the cold war than it was in the days of the Soviet veto, has gotten overextended and is now presiding over policy failures in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti. The fecklessness of the European Community (EC) and NATO in failing to stop the slaughter in Bosnia shows how laughable was George Bush's concept of a "new world order." Instead of order we have a world far more dangerous and insecure than that of the cold war. Just as in 1914—so the pessimists conclude—the Balkans in our own day may serve as the tinderbox for a larger European conflict.

This litany, promoted by media and academic pundits around the world, makes the present situation sound very, very bad indeed. But I would argue that it misses the deeper reality of the contemporary situation, and vastly exaggerates the problems we face.

One reason it does so is that the pessimistic outlook is held primarily by Europeans or by Americans focused on European affairs, and represents a highly Eurocentric view. For a "return to tribalism" is not a helpful formula for understanding much of the rest of the world.

LET us begin at home. After having come through a bruising recession, the United States now leads the industrialized world in economic growth, hitting a rate of close to 4 percent in the fourth quarter of 1993. This latest recession performed the positive function of all recessions: it forced corporations to trim fat and focus on productivity, leaving American companies leaner and more competitive than they have ever been (albeit at a cost in certain jobs). Many of the productivity-enhancing innovations introduced in the 1980's, mostly related to information and communications technology, are now finally showing up on corporate bottom lines, particularly in the service sector. Who today would trade the American semiconductor, computer, aerospace, banking, or biotech industries for their Japanese counterparts? Or, for that matter, the American automobile industry for the German one?

As Henry S. Rowen of Stanford has pointed out, the new reality of the 21st century is that many poor people around the world are going to get rich. This is nowhere more true than in Asia, a region that is hardly descending into tribal violence. Its problems are, rather, ones of adjustment to newfound prosperity. China, the world's largest country, grew an astonishing 13 percent in 1993, and every other country in the region (with the exception of Japan) forged ahead at comparable rates despite the recessions in other parts of the world.

Just as the proponents of modernization theory predicted in the 1950's, democracy has

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been following in the wake of economic development: the election of Kim Young Sam in South Korea last year represents a final break with that country's authoritarian past, while Taiwan will hold its first completely free elections in the near future. The most remarkable development is occurring in Japan. Despite Karel Van Wolferen's protestations that nothing ever changes in Japan, the Japanese political system is slowly moving away from the corrupt machine politics of the past couple of generations toward a more genuinely pluralistic democracy.

There are, it is true, serious security problems in Asia, the most important being North Korea's nuclear program. Further, the whole region will have to adjust to a very large and dynamic China, which in a decade may have an impact on regional politics comparable to the emergence of a unified Germany after 1871. But the likelihood seems low that in ten years China will still be a unitary, purposeful, authoritarian superpower with external ambitions, given the massive and rapid socioeconomic transformation it is now undergoing. A fragmenting or unstable China would also cause serious problems for the region, but not a balance-of-power threat.

In general, the character of international relations in East Asia is remarkably different from that of Europe: security concerns have for some time now taken a back seat to economic issues as the chief preoccupation of the region's best minds. This perhaps explains why the countries most directly threatened by North Korean nuclear weapons—South Korea and Japan, as well as China—are decidedly more relaxed about the problem than is the distant United States. They believe that North Korea is one of the world's weakest states, economically and politically, and they maintain that its erratic behavior is the product of weakness rather than strength. Since time is working against the Kim Il Sung regime, it is in their view better dealt with through patience.

Finally, Latin America's prospects look brighter than at any time since the first decades of the century. Despite recent setbacks in Haiti and Venezuela, three of the region's large economies—those of Chile, Mexico, and Argentina—have liberalized substantially over the past decade, and have experienced low inflation and high growth. The code to economic development—a liberal one—has been cracked (or, more properly, relearned after decades of Marxist and Keynesian confusion), and those countries that have mustered the political will to follow its dictates are being rewarded.

Indeed, one of the great slanders of last fall's debate on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was Ross Perot's assertion that Mexicans were desperately poor people who could not afford to buy anything. In the next generation, Americans will have to get used to thinking about Mexico not as a political and economic basket case, but as an avid consumer and increasingly aggressive competitor. Even Peru, by most measures one of the world's most troubled countries, has seen a flood of new investment and positive economic growth since the Fujimori government's arrest of Abimael Guzman, the leader of the Shining Path guerrilla movement. With the passage of NAFTA and the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the foundations have been laid for another generation of economic growth in Latin America.

Now let us turn to Europe. There, it is clear, nationalism and ethnic violence *have* been worse than anyone expected four years ago. Civil or interstate wars have been raging in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan, with many other potential conflicts just beneath the surface. But the chief indictment of the new world order centers, of course, on Bosnia, a horror the like of which has not been seen in Europe since the Holocaust.

The Bosnian conflict has four possible implications for the broader security of Europe. The first is that the war there could spread and involve other Balkan countries, and then the great powers of Europe. The second is that Yugoslavia will set an encouraging precedent for new conflicts among other intertwined ethnic groups in the former Communist world—Hungarians and Romanians, Poles and Lithuanians, Russians and Ukrainians. The third is that ethnic cleansing will legitimate racial and ethnic intolerance even in the apparently stable democracies of Western Europe, undermining their political fabric at a particularly delicate moment. And lastly, the ineffectiveness of international organizations like the EC, NATO, and the UN in dealing with the Yugoslav crisis will damage their credibility and encourage further aggression.

These fears are real, and should not be dismissed lightly. On the other hand, each one can and has been greatly overstated.

Take the question of escalation. The scenarios by which the Yugoslav civil war could lead to a larger conflagration tend to be rather nebulous. Other Balkan countries could indeed get involved if conflict spreads to the Serbian province of Kosovo, or to Macedonia. But of the interested outside powers, Albania—Europe's poorest and most backward country—wields virtually no power, while Greece would likely side with Serbia in crushing Macedonian independence.

Far more important than local Balkan considerations, however, is the absence of a larger great-power rivalry in Europe. In 1914, Europe was divided between two hostile alliances, and if war had not broken out over the Balkans, it could just as well have been sparked by Tangier or the Baghdad Railway. Today, the great powers of Europe are, if anything, struggling to avoid messy

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foreign entanglements as they try to deal with pressing domestic economic problems. Regional conflicts were of concern during the cold war because the superpower competition left open the constant possibility of superpower intervention and ultimately escalation. But the absence today of larger great-power rivalries means that sectional strife will remain regionalized in its impact, however horrendous the consequences may be for local populations. The ironic result is that even as the world is being united through communications technology, it is being regionalized and *dis*connected politically by the absence of a global great-power rivalry.

The second fear, that the Yugoslav example will be replicated among other ethnic groups, has already been realized in many places. But most of these conflicts, such as those in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, can and have been safely ignored by the outside world. (The only one that will pose direct security concerns for Europe is between Russia and Ukraine, an issue that will be dealt with below.)

The truth is that the mutual hatred of Yugoslavia's constituent groups is in many respects an extreme and atypical situation, and other parts of Eastern Europe look much less bleak. Economically, recent news is encouraging. Virtually all East European countries that have engaged in shock therapy or some variant of radical market reform have seen their inflation rates come down and their production bottom out and then rebound. Poland's GNP stopped falling in the second half of 1992 and is now rapidly on the way up. While recent elections in Poland brought back to power a left-wing coalition including the former Communists, this does not represent a rejection of reform so much as a desire to modulate its pace.* Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, and Latvia are similarly poised for economic turnarounds, much like Western Europe in the early 1950's.

The third fear—that Bosnia will undermine tolerance and democracy in Western Europe—is supported by the wave of anti-immigrant violence in Germany, Italy, France, and most recently Austria. Nevertheless, the embourgeoisement of West Europeans has gone very far, and their situation is quite different from that of the rural Serbs and Croats driving the current struggle in Yugoslavia. If one scratches the typical Italian, German, or Frenchman of today, one is unlikely to find a vicious nationalist itching to come out. Such individuals certainly exist in Western Europe, but they have thus far been segregated at the margins of their societies. With any degree of sensible leadership, and in the absence of new discontinuities like war or depression, there is no reason to think they will not remain there.

The fourth and final fear concerns the weakness of international institutions in dealing with the war in Yugoslavia. The international community's single most important failure was actually an error of commission rather than omission—that is, the placing of a UN arms embargo on all the combatants in the civil war, and the subsequent failure to lift it so as to give the Bosnian Muslims a chance to defend themselves. An early ending of the embargo was the only policy option that had a chance of stopping Serb aggression at a reasonable cost to the outside world, and the fact that it was so bitterly opposed by the Europeans and so weakly advocated by the United States is both a moral failure and a political mystery.

On the other hand, the failure of various international organizations to intervene actively to promote order in the ways suggested by some does not reflect impotence so much as prudence. It is not self-evident that multinational, or even single-country organizations can intervene effectively and at reasonable cost in many conflicts that are primarily ethnic and/or civil in nature. Those, like Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, who argue that appeasement of Serbia encouraged the nationalists in Russia to vote for Vladimir Zhirinovsky in last December's parliamentary election should consider what lessons would have been drawn from a *failed* Western intervention.

The UN cannot function as a serious security organization except when it acts as a cover for unilateral American intervention, as in Korea or the Gulf. It has gotten into trouble in Somalia and Haiti because it did indeed outrun its mandate. As for NATO, it is an effective security organization, but primarily in those canonical big-war scenarios for which it was originally designed. Those who want to extend NATO's functions to include ethnic peacekeeping and the like seriously risk involving it in contingencies for which it is not particularly well suited, thereby unintentionally subverting its ability to execute tasks it is better able to perform. It is true that the world community does not have an effective instrument to promote order and security in regions like Eastern Europe today; but if the chance of escalation is low, this lack will not be critical.

The gloomy Europeanist assessment of the implications of ethnic conflict would be more cogent if there were an ongoing great-power rivalry. And in fact, many do postulate that one exists, latently if not overtly. Thus, a view is currently coalescing that Russia is well under way toward restoring the old union, using the cause of ethnic Russians stranded in the "near abroad" by the breakup of the Soviet Union to bully and threaten the other Soviet successor states. Some, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, believe it is almost inevitable that President Boris Yeltsin

* See George Weigel's article, beginning on p. 37.—ED.

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will fall and that Moscow will go back to its authoritarian, expansionist ways. Others, like Henry Kissinger, believe that Yeltsin himself harbors great-power yearnings, while analysts like William Odom argue that Yeltsin has already sold his soul to the Russian military in return for its support in his showdown with parliament.

People who offer more sinister interpretations of recent Russian behavior point to Eduard Shevardnadze's Georgia, as well as other examples. Having at first bolstered the breakaway Abkhaz republic against Tbilisi, the Russians subsequently switched sides and agreed to help Shevardnadze, on the condition that he return Georgia to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In addition, the Russians used Ukraine's extreme economic vulnerability to press for a very favorable deal over the Black Sea fleet; Russian troops are giving assistance to the Tajik government in its war against Islamic forces; Moscow has repeatedly threatened to slow down its withdrawal form the Baltic states unless the latter recognize the rights of ethnic Russians living there; and a Russian army, under the command of the bull-necked General Lebed, has in effect hijacked the region of Moldova east of the Dniester River and turned it into an "independent" republic.

The December 12 election in Russia, in which the neo-fascist Zhirinovsky won nearly a quarter of the popular vote, may help to make this interpretation a reality. Zhirinovsky, a Great Russian chauvinist, has unabashedly called for restoration of the old czarist empire, including Finland and parts of Poland.

Yet to write Russia off is still premature. Up to this point, Russia has been drawn, willy-nilly, into the affairs of the other successor states by a combination of two factors: first, the activities of local Russian forces, usually hard-line nationalists or former Communists bitterly opposed to the regime in Moscow; and second, the incompetence, weakness, and chaos prevailing in the neighboring states. But this is very different from saying that Yeltsin is following a thought-out expansionist master plan. In general, there is a fine line between a Yeltsin who caters to nationalist sentiment just enough to remain in power, thereby neutralizing more aggressive tendencies, and one who adopts the chauvinist agenda as his own. In the coming months the key task for American policy will be to judge which is which.

Ultimately, those who take a jaundiced view of Russian intentions have already written off Yeltsin's democratic experiment. They argue—with much plausibility—that the political situation in Russia is unlikely to stabilize, or the economy to turn around, or democratic institutions to start putting down roots any time soon. Yet the policy question the United States faces is whether *we* want to be the ones to turn out the lights, especially when the new constitution adopted last December at least clears the way for a hyper-presidential regime that has some chance of promoting economic reform and a moderate foreign policy.

AT ANY given historical moment there are always ominous clouds on the horizon. The current nightmares of specialists in international relations—nationalism or fundamentalism run amok; immigration; a growing gap between rich and poor countries; uncontrolled nuclear proliferation; and the like—may not be as dangerous as they are portrayed. Others less discussed may be more urgent. I will pick just two problems, foreseeable now, that need to be addressed, one with domestic and the other with international ramifications.

The first problem arises out of the third-world success in achieving economic growth, and its impact on income distribution and job security in the United States. The U.S. was in a uniquely favorable position for the first generation or so after World War II, because the dominance of its manufacturing industries allowed it to reward relatively low-skilled manufacturing labor with relatively high wages. These are the "good jobs at good wages" that politicians like to champion. Today, the U.S. economy continues to be good at generating lots of high-skill, high-wage jobs, as well as low-skill, low-wage ones; what it can no longer do is protect, much less create, the kinds of low-skill, high-wage jobs it once did. The passionate resistance of unionized labor to NAFTA reflects the intense threat under which the traditional American working class feels itself.

In the best of all worlds, the United States would accept the loss of these jobs, while moving its workers up the skill ladder into higher value-added occupations. But most working-class Americans have little confidence in government-sponsored retraining programs, whose record has indeed been abysmal, and they fear that the public-education system will not provide their children with the skills necessary to avoid downward mobility in the 21st century. The global village, in other words, has a very harsh side, and America's ability to live in it successfully will depend on its ability to reverse the slide in its educational system.

The second problem is one that we could be facing as early as this year. Because of their respective sizes and the fact that they are home to large numbers of nuclear weapons, conflict between Russia and Ukraine cannot be safely ignored. There is growing doubt as to whether Ukraine will be able to survive as an independent state. In December 1991 a majority of the ten million ethnic Russians living in Ukraine voted for independence, mostly on the ground that an independent Ukraine would have a better shot at economic reform than one still tied to Russia. These expectations have been sorely dis-

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appointed by the inept former Communists running the country, and it seems only a matter of time before the ethnic Russians there decide that it would be better to rejoin Moscow.

The Yeltsin government is not at all eager to see this happen: the Donbass coal-mining region, where many of the Ukrainian Russians live, is an economic albatross that Moscow would just as soon not have hanging around its neck. But if there is a general breakdown of the Ukrainian state, and calls on the part of ethnic Russians for a return to Russia, it will be very hard for any Russian government to turn its back on them. Moreover, a breakdown of the Ukrainian state may mean loss of centralized control over the nuclear weapons still on Ukrainian territory, something the Russians are not going to regard with equanimity. The temptation either to take part in the dismemberment of Ukraine, or to intervene militarily to gain control of those weapons, will thus become a real possibility.

A Ukrainian collapse would be easier to handle, in a way, if Russia itself were by then to have turned authoritarian and aggressive: the United States would simply oppose forceful Russian moves to reabsorb Ukraine, and we would return to an unfortunate, though familiar, polarization of Eurasia. There would then be a much stronger consensus to admit Hungary, Poland, and other threatened East European states into NATO.

But if Yeltsin were still in power and reform still on track, the U.S. would be faced with some extremely difficult policy choices. Russian motives might be mixed and not necessarily aggressive, but there would be a very strong inclination to interpret them in the worst possible light: we would not want to be seen acquiescing in the restoration of the former empire. Accordingly, the U.S. might be driven to break with a clumsy but still moderate Russia, thereby undercutting its democratic experiment prematurely and perhaps unnecessarily.

IT WOULD be very surprising if the collapse of the largest empire in the world had not caused enormous instability and confusion. We are obviously in the midst of a prolonged transition period as political, economic, and interstate systems transform themselves into something else. But it is vital not to take transitional turbulence for a permanent state of affairs, or to ignore the elements of order that exist while focusing on extreme cases of disorder in relatively unimportant parts of the world.

To be sure, it is primarily specialists in international affairs who are pessimistic; others, like investment bankers, who have to put money on the line behind their views of world order, tend to be much more sanguine. But among people professionally involved with international affairs, the liberals tend to be unhappy with the idea that the West won the ideological struggle of the cold war outright, and are eager to assert that the vindication of capitalism and liberal democracy is only apparent. Many conservatives, for their part, remain wedded to a dour view both of human nature and human institutions.

And then there is a simple matter of prudence: who, liberal or conservative, would not find it safer to be remembered as a Cassandra than as a Pollyanna? A Cassandra proved wrong (and there are many of them populating our TV talk shows and newspaper columns) is never held accountable; indeed, such people retain an aura of moral seriousness for their tragic sense of human history. Naive Pollyannas, by contrast, are routinely held up to ridicule. In the stock market, those who are unduly bearish are punished over the long run. The "market" for views on international affairs is, unfortunately, not quite so self-correcting.

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Talking to the Enemy

A Story

Avner Mandelman

BEFORE the radio had even reported the news, Nitza called me from the kibbutz to say that there had been a disaster: three terrorists had sneaked in and barricaded themselves in the children's nursery. "They . . . they're there right now," she said, her voice cracking.

I swept all the papers off my desk, including the insurance form I was filling in for the new client who sat before me, his eyebrows joined in displeasure.

"Is Ilan there, inside?" I asked.

Ilan was our five-year-old boy. He had stayed with Nitza on the kibbutz after we'd divorced three years before, when I moved back to Tel Aviv.

"Y. . . yes," Nitza said, her harsh weeping echoing through the long-distance crackle.

"I'm coming," I said.

I knew I wouldn't make it in time—it was a three-and-a-half-hour drive to Kibbutz Sha'anan, practically on the border with Lebanon—but all I could think of was that last week, when it was my turn to have Ilan, I'd canceled because I had work to do.

"Where you going?" asked the client. He was an old *yekke*, a German Jew, who had come to see me about insuring his jewelry store. (I had opened my agency after leaving the army.)

"I have to go," I told him.

"Now?"

Without answering I grabbed the car keys and, like an idiot, the .22 Beretta from my desk drawer—only later in the car did I notice the magazine was empty—and ran out.

All the way north I kept thinking that maybe if I drove fast enough I could still get there in time. But when I arrived of course it was all over.

Whether the rescue attempt had been botched or whether there was never any chance of success was never made clear, and was anyway irrelevant. From the moment the three terrorists raced through the almond orchard, passing Hanan Berkovitch, the old Bible teacher, on their way in, it almost seemed preordained. Sweeping by him they shouted—in Hebrew, no less—that they were on a military exercise, and the fool—he was returning from guard duty in the avocado field, with a loaded Uzi, two extra magazines, a walkie-talkie, everything—let them pass; even with their Russian RPGs slung in plain sight across their backs, with the green Syrian ammo boxes they were lugging between them as they ran, with the AK-47 Kalashnikovs swinging at their hips, he let them pass.

But a minute later there was a shot, and the children started screaming inside the nursery—the bastards had killed the teacher, Miriam Goldin, with a single bullet to the head the instant they burst in—and by then everyone knew, and all the men on the kibbutz raced pell-mell to the rescue, grabbing whatever they could find: Uzis, Kalashes, MAC-10s, Galils, even rusty Mausers and British Lee Enfields that had been stashed in the armory since the war of '48. The terrorists (no one knew yet how many there were) had in the meantime barricaded themselves inside the nursery, pushing cribs and beds against the swinging doors, and began shooting out the windows without pause—they must have brought thousands of rounds with them. The first to get it was Hanan Berkovitch—he rushed forward as if asking for it—then Micha Barzel, the manager of the cowshed with whom I used to play ping-pong. And by that time a patrol from the army's Golani brigade that was in the area, mapping some *wadi*, took over until the *Sayeret*, the Recon Commando unit, arrived by helicopter. It had taken them only 40 minutes, I'll give them that.

Later I was told that two of the children had probably died right away when the bastards bound them too tightly, or something—they had brought large spools of copper wire and pliers for the purpose. I didn't ask if Ilan was one of the two. What did it matter? When I arrived, the burial society was already there. The moment I saw them, three stooped old men with black skullcaps and flapping black coats through which the fringes of their prayer shawls flickered, I knew; even before I saw them dragging the small coffins into the nursery, trampling the asters.

"Don't go in!" Musa Hartov shouted at me. He had been my second-in-command when I left the *Sayeret* two years earlier. He rushed to my side and grabbed my arm. "I'm telling you, don't go in!" He was still dressed in his black Nomex cov-

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erall with the kevlar vest and tight kevlar helmet on his head, looking like a spaceman with all these objects hanging from his back and belt, radios, flares, magazines, syringes, knives, nylon ropes, clusters of grenades. He smelled of cordite and blood, his Patuga canvas boots grimy with blood and brains.

I tried to push past him, but he stiff-armed me away. Four medics stumbled by, carrying three soldiers piled on a single stretcher, all dead. One had his neck torn off; the head lolled to the side, hanging by a thread of skin, the mouth moving. The medic slapped it back onto the stretcher and threw a gray blanket over the three corpses.

The crowd of kibbutzniks stood frozen, whispering in shock. Only the crackle of radios and the slow whirr of the copter blades could be heard, and a distant chirp of sprinklers, probably in the avocado fields.

NITZA stood a little way off, her red hair flying in all directions, hands to her mouth, with Yossi, that husband of hers, at her side. He was carrying a ridiculously long Nagant, a Russian pistol as long as his thigh and maybe 50 years old. He probably got to the armory last and that was all that was left. The two of them were in their pajamas. They'd probably been in bed, screwing, when it happened.

"I came as soon as I could," I said.

Nitza rattled her head violently from side to side as if to say, don't talk to me.

Her husband said it had just ended. "They got them," he said. "Finally."

"But the children?" I asked. I couldn't see how we could talk so quietly. The sun was shining on the wet grass, somewhere a merry tune came from a forgotten radio. The sprinklers still chirped.

"Nine of the eleven," Yossi said. "Nine. Including Ilan." He began to curse in Arabic, at length. I didn't see what that would accomplish now, cursing.

Nitza chose that moment to start screaming, and at the sound of her voice all the other women began to scream, too. I looked at her and all at once, without thinking, I turned around and barged into the nursery, pushing Musa aside. This time he said nothing, and let me pass.

The inside of the nursery looked like a broken dollhouse splashed with ketchup. There was more red than white on the walls. Two unshaven characters looking like hippies, their black T-shirts spattered with dark brown, were slumped against an overturned crib, under a large cardboard drawing of the Evil Haman leading the Virtuous Mordechai on a horse, with Queen Esther looking on. The holiday of Purim was two days away, and the older children had probably made this drawing for the younger ones, for the party. Soon they would have begun making their Purim masks. The two terrorists looked calm, as if sleeping. Gray stuff dripped from their heads. A third was lying face down in the doorway, his head a mass of red and yellowish gray. In the other room the three graybeards were bending over some small heaps. I began moving in their direction but at that moment Musa caught up with me and dragged me back by my belt, with both hands.

"Don't be a donkey," he hissed.

I heard myself ask, "PLF?"

The Palestine Liberation Front had a training camp in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, not 30 miles away. Twice before they had tried to get in, but each time a Golani patrol had gotten them. This time they didn't.

"No, PLO. They had their papers on them."

The three old men went by, single file, each carrying a little box. I made to follow but Musa, one hand still at my belt, hit softly at my jaw with the open palm of his other hand, turning my head away.

"No," he said.

I said, "I want in on the retribution."

"Don't be a donkey," replied Musa, releasing my belt, and he was gone. But in a second he was back. He punched my shoulder, hard. "Goddamn," he said. "They got three of my guys, too."

Again he grabbed my belt and this time I let him pull me out; on the way I saw the old men going in again. Outside, on the grass, were six cardboard boxes, not very large.

"I want in," I said.

"They got them with RPGs through the walls."

"I want in."

"Your mother. Once you're out, you're out!"

I opened my mouth to argue, but just then the Prime Minister arrived, and the reporters, in two large Super Frelon helicopters, and also a Cobra Medevac with a red Magen David on its tail. The Prime Minister nodded at me, curtly. He used to visit our apartment in Tel Aviv and talk to my father in the kitchen, over a glass of tea.

Yaro Peleg, the chief of staff, stood beside the PM. He said, "The bastards got three of ours in the first two minutes, with RPGs." Someone standing behind said that as usual the terrorists had wanted to bargain: the kids for some imprisoned Fatah guys. "But don't they know by now? That we never talk to them?"

The PM asked, "Our guys had these American suits on? That cost us $500 apiece? Now look." He gestured with both hands toward the empty stretchers flapping on the Cobra's skids, in the rotor's wash.

"They can only stop 7.62 mm," said the chief of staff, abashed. "Maybe 9 mm."

The PM looked at me.

"Yes," I said. "Maximum."

There was a short pause. The reporters began to inch forward.

"How's your father?" the Prime Minister asked.

"Alive," I said. "My son got it."

He nodded, his mouth pinched, and immediately turned on his heel and left. He probably

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knew I was going to ask him the same thing I'd asked Musa.

I DIDN'T get to see Nitza, or Ilan's body, or any of the other bereaved parents, before I returned to Tel Aviv. I only sat down for a few minutes with Yossi, who said he'd see about everything and would let me know about the funeral. It was painful for both of us, this conversation: the betrayed husband and the new husband, the winning fornicator. But we made the most of it, like civilized people. He brewed some coffee, and I didn't find it in me to refuse. I was amazed how numb I felt. Nine children dead, one of them mine, also three old friends, and the only thing I felt was an odd sort of heat in my stomach, and a tingling in my nose. No tears; nothing.

I asked Yossi, belatedly, whether any of his own children got it. "No, thank God," he said. "Last month they were transferred to the older children's house." His freckled face vibrated as if a fan were blowing air through his skin, from the inside out.

"That's good," I said.

He, too, had been married when he began carrying on with Nitza behind my back while I was away in Egypt or in Jordan, in deep penetrations or ambushes; two of the children from his first marriage, the twin boys, were still on the kibbutz. The third, a girl, had left with her mother, to live in Haifa.

He offered me a bed in the spare room.

"No," I said, "I have to go back."

He didn't even try to persuade me.

Back in Tel Aviv I called my father. He was seventy-two then, no longer active in anything, but he still had his contacts in the army, and also in the government, where he was once a minister without portfolio, "minister for *shmutz*," as he once put it. Dirty things.

"I heard," he said. "Ilan went."

I said they got them in the end. "But I'm sure we'll do something, to retaliate."

"Sure," said my father. In his younger days he had been one of the founders of the *Sayeret*, in a way.

"I want in," I said.

"How's Nitza?" my father asked.

His calm in disasters used to infuriate me, but by now I was used to it. Or maybe I was becoming more like him. It's not something to be proud of. My only son just got it, and not one tear.

"So-so," I said.

"Yossi with her?"

When I didn't answer, he said, "Nu, *barukh dayan emet*," blessed be the True Judge. A Jew is supposed to say this when someone dies, to show he's not mad at God, or anything.

I said, "I want in on this."

"Don't be a donkey," my father replied. "Leave it to them."

"I'm not old yet," I said. "I want in on this. Call Dada, tell him I want in."

David (Dada) Shlomovitz, another Tel Aviv boy, was the current commander of the *Sayeret*. He'd been three classes below me in the *Alliance* high school. Used to play the violin, too, and also soccer.

"You go to sleep, Mickey," my father said. "Tomorrow we'll both go see Nitza. You want me to drive?"

I said I didn't want him to drive; I didn't want to see Nitza; I wanted in on the operation.

My father said, "Even if I made the call, they'd never take you, you know that. You didn't do what you were told the last time."

"This time I'll do anything," I said.

Two years before, I had left the *Sayeret*—was let go, really—after refusing to give the go-ahead in a little operation in Lebanon. Two months it had taken to plan. A local chieftain of the Hezbollah, a good mechanic who specialized in delayed Katyusha rockets. All his sons helped him, all six of them, none older than eleven. We were outside his yard already, but he had three of them sitting in his lap. Maybe he knew we were near. I took everybody back. Two of my guys got it on the way back, from snipers. Finally a sniper of ours, from the Paratroopers Recon unit, got him.

"No," said my father. "You can come here, if you want; you can sleep in your old bed." Then he hung up.

I called Dada Shlomovitz myself, at his home in Tzahala, north of Tel Aviv, where all the married officers lived. He picked up the phone on the first ring.

"It's Mickey," I said.

"No," he said. "I talked to Musa. I . . . I'm sorry about Ilan, but no."

He said a few other things—about Ilan, and about Nitza, and about how in a month or so he would come see me, if I wanted, when everything was over. In the background I could hear several men's voices, gruff, curt, talking in low tones. No women.

I said, "I speak French, Arabic; come on, Dada."

"No. I said no."

There was a pause. I knew I was being foolish. This was an open phone line.

"Please," I said. "This one, I have to—"

He hung up.

Next morning my father called. I put my album with old photos of Ilan back in the drawer and we spoke for a while about nothing: the heat, the synagogue where he was now a trustee (he had inexplicably become religious when my mother died), my failing insurance business. Suddenly, out of the blue, he said, "Get married again, you donkey, you can have more children."

I told him I didn't need his advice.

"I talked to Musa," he said, as if continuing the

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same line of conversation. "They're afraid to take you, you never do what you're told."

What never? Once. I said, "I'll swear on the grave of anyone they want."

"I tried," said my father.

I got the keys to my car and drove straight to Tzahala to see Dada Shlomovitz.

THERE was the usual white Subaru with curtained windows parked outside his small villa, under the *tzaftzafa* trees. As I got out, the door of the Subaru opened and a young Moroccan emerged, his right hand at the back of his belt. He seemed vaguely familiar, although I couldn't place him. But he, apparently, knew me. Probably someone from the Shin-Bet with whom I'd worked on something. There were so many things, I couldn't remember them all, nor did I want to.

"Oh, *shalom*, Mickey," he said, lamely. "I . . . I heard about it, about your boy. . . . You going to see Dada?"

I nodded and climbed the bare concrete steps. The door wasn't even locked. Inside the living room were Dada and Musa, talking and waving their hands in the air, and three men: Yaro Peleg, the chief of staff, tall and thickset, and two others, one short and bald, the other tall and curly, both leaning on the wall. Probably *shoo-shoo*: hush-hush guys from the Shin-Bet or Mossad. New guys. A lot had changed in the last few years, after the foul-up of '73, and I hadn't kept in touch.

Musa and Dada stopped talking. "What're you doing here?" Dada snapped.

I sat down on a chair without being invited.

One of the *shoo-shoos* said, "That's Mickey Ben-Atar?"

"*Hada hu*," Dada said in Arabic. That's him.

"I want in on this," I said.

Another man came through the kitchen door, looked in, and went back to the kitchen.

I said, "You're shy three men now, anyway."

"Four," Yaro said. "One died an hour ago."

"So you have a few vacancies."

Musa spread his arms wide at Dada, as if to say, I tried, or I told you so.

Dada looked at me and shook his head. "There's no way I'll—"

The phone rang and Yaro picked it up. After grunting into it for a minute he put down the receiver.

There was a pause. "What do you want from my life?" he said to me.

"Who was it?" asked the taller *shoo-shoo*.

"Himself," said Yaro, looking at me. "Your father called him, too."

I said again that I wanted in on the operation, like a broken record.

The shorter *shoo-shoo* said maybe I'd better leave; I said no, and he said I'd better, and I said he could try and make me—just like two idiot kids in a Tel Aviv schoolyard. "OK, I will," he said, and Yaro told him to keep his hands to himself, that I was a bereaved father, and other crap like that. There was some shouting between the two *shoo-shoo* guys and Dada, and then Musa joined in, and the chief of staff too, who said it was up to Dada. At last Dada said, "But you never do what you're told."

"Once," I said. "Only once."

I could see I was in, so if they wanted me to grovel, all right, I would grovel. I said I would do anything.

"Two guys," Dada said. "One of them a sergeant, with three children himself. And for what? For a bunch of lousy baby *Arabushim*? They'll grow up, they'll get RPGs themselves, for their birthdays."

"I speak Arabic and French," I said, "if you're going to Tunis."

"You're fat now," Musa said. I could tell I was in.

"Your mother is fat," I said. Now that I was in I could say anything I wanted.

"*Your* mother," Dada shouted. "*Your* mother! You're not the only bereaved father in the world."

"Yes," said the shorter *shoo-shoo*, tightly.

There was another pause, of a different quality.

"I'll be at the base tomorrow at noon," I said.

"Tonight," said Musa. "Your mother, tonight."

The man in the kitchen came in with coffee. Dada said, "Tomorrow, after the funeral, is good enough." Stiffly he offered me a cup. But I saw they were itching to talk about me, so I left.

THE funeral took place the following day in the small cemetery of Kibbutz Sha'anan. Nine little coffins, none larger than a big ammo box, and three large ones, one for Hanan Berkovitch, one for Micha Barzel, and one for Miriam Goldin. I stood near Nitza all during the service, my father on her other side, Yossi behind her, as if she were liable to bolt and we had to hem her in. Yossi was dressed in his blue air-force uniform with all his medals and campaign decorations. He had been a Mirage pilot. A good one, I'm told. My father and I were in civilian dress.

As the coffins were being lowered into the ground (a whole Golani platoon was there and they lowered them by rope all at once, on a signal), Nitza said, "You going with them, to Tunis?"

I didn't ask how she even knew there was going to be an operation. She was no longer with the *shoo-shoo* herself, but so what. She only had to ask.

I hoisted my shoulder, to indicate maybe.

"If you want me there, I'll go too," she said.

"No, no," my father said. "We have enough people."

Yossi, behind us, said something about keeping our voices down.

"Yes," she said after a while. "I'm finished with this. You go."

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Nitza used to be stationed in the Mossad's Beirut office. That's how we'd met; on the Beirut coast. She had been in charge of the convoy that was supposed to wait for us at Mua'alamiya beach. I went with the naval commandos, as the Specialist. Nothing came out of that operation—intelligence had screwed up, as usual, and the guy we were after, some Libyan with plenty of Qaddafi's money who was running around trying to launch another group, had gone to a whore for the night, or maybe to his family; something. So Nitza and I ended up waiting on the beach until just before dawn, side by side in a cramped overheated Peugeot, talking about jazz and movies and soccer in French in case someone overheard us. She was a kibbutznik, I from Tel Aviv. But she had played the piano when she was young, and I had played the violin, and after a month we were married. It lasted three years. She left the *shoo-shoo* and returned to the kibbutz after Ilan was born to work in the greenhouses, and I joined, too. But I was rarely home, and soon she began screwing around. In the Mossad it's no big deal. That's how they relieve the stress, I'm told. But I couldn't take it, so we got divorced and I returned to Tel Aviv.

The funeral took no more than a half-hour. When the cantor finished, the soldiers loaded wooden bullets and fired into the air, and that was that. As we were walking back to the dining room, Nitza said, "Musa said it's Abu Salaam, for sure, that it was his operation."

"Probably," I said.

"His son is Arafat's lover boy, that's how he got to be chief of operations."

"Well, he's not bad," I said, speaking professionally.

"No," she said. "He's good, the bastard."

Afterward Musa gave me a lift back to the *Sayeret*'s base near Jerusalem where we would train for the next two weeks. A team of carpenters was already building a mock-up of Abu Salaam's villa. Like most PLO bigwigs, he lived in Sidi Bousseid, a posh suburb of Tunis, not far from the old port city of Carthage.

We divided into two teams. Musa was head of Team B, I of Team A. By then the Mossad had confirmed that the project had indeed been Abu Salaam's, and we went into high gear. We trained at night and at odd hours during the day when no satellites were flying overhead. Once my father came by, stayed for the night, watched a whole test-run, had a talk with Dada, then left in the morning without even speaking to me. Whether he was in on the operation, or had just come for a look-see, I couldn't tell. He was retired, after all. The PM came too, once, and the chief of staff, but not many others.

We were supposed to get into the villa, take the guy down, and be out again in less than 30 seconds. The team that did it fastest without a screw-up would get the commission, the other would play back-up in the street outside. My team won, at 29.6 seconds.

Five days before departure, Musa and Dada and I flew into Tunis via Paris and Rome. Someone in the Mossad had picked up a rumor in a Tripoli bar that maybe the Israelis were going to do something, so the PM wanted us to check the place ourselves before we brought everybody in, to see if they had beefed up security, if there had been a leak. But there was nothing. We toured the suburb, taking pictures, accompanied by the Tunis Mossad chief and the second-in-command from Paris. It was nice. Trees, shrubs, flowers. The bastards certainly lived it up, what with all the money they extorted from the Saudis and the Kuwaitis. We saw Arafat's house, and Abu El-Khol's, the intelligence chief, and the villa of Abu Salaam, a pink stucco shoebox on the corner of a side street with a good view of the sea. We returned to Tel Aviv two days before D-day and went back into training for the final competition.

After my team won, Musa took me aside and gave me a little talk. "I'll be just behind you," he said. "You hear? When you see him, do it."

I felt myself going red in the neck. "I was in this when you were still in high school," I told him. Then I said a few other things, dredging up all his screw-ups, from basic-training days and even before.

But he didn't retreat. "Not like with that sheikh in Lebanon. Children shmildren, women shwomen. You see him, you take him down."

"Sure I'll take him down," I said, restraining myself. "What do you think, I'm going for a picnic?"

"Children they'll kill here?" Musa snarled at me, as if I myself had been killing some, a minute ago. "We'll cut their balls off and stuff them in their mouths, so they'll know. Children they'll kill here?"

"Go to sleep," I said.

"No, really." Musa said. "They want to fight? Man-to-man? Okay. But children?"

"*Ya'allah*," I said. "Enough."

"Peace they want us to make with them? You want to make peace with bastards who kill children?"

"Not me," I said.

At last he went to sleep. Probably angry that his team had lost.

WE LEFT on a Friday night from Ashdod, the southernmost Mediterranean port in Israel. My father came to see us off, maybe also to see me. He looked lost in his frayed khaki pants and sweat-soaked nylon shirt, among the piles of ammo boxes, dismantled copter parts, irritable naval commandos with their heaps of odd gear, and just plain staff officers from headquarters in Tel Aviv who had come to see the culmination of their plan. There was also the obligatory rabbi who stood to the

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side, wrapped in a prayer shawl, mumbling into his book.

We were 32 men in all on two *Dabboor* missile boats, one of which carried the dismantled AH-1S Cobra gunship, just in case, its body wrapped in green tarp, the rotors and engine below deck. The other boat had a mini-hospital with 500 liters of blood, also in case.

The sea was calm all the way to Tunis, luckily—I always get seasick; but this time it almost felt like being on the Yarkon river in Tel Aviv, where Nitza and Ilan and I used to take a flat-bottomed dinghy, when we came to visit my father, and row to Seven Mills and back. I had brought a few old letters of Ilan's—from the age of four he used to write to me, in large rounded script, telling me of butterflies, and clouds, and white cows—but I had no time to look at them now, on the boat. There was as usual a ton of stuff to check. The black Nomex coveralls with their thousand pockets—they tore so easily that each of us had a sewing kit; the thick kevlar vests, which we had to oil every two hours with green olive oil so they wouldn't get stiff and squeak; the special night-vision goggles that would require tuning an hour before we went in; the face masks—these had to fit, and I had to check everyone's; the radios; the emergency homing devices; the thousand-and-one weapons—Uzis, MAC-10s, Galils, Berettas. We had so much stuff it was ridiculous. I don't know, in my father's day, before the '48 War of Independence, they used to go into Cairo or Amman with nothing, just an old Arab *galabieh*, one sharp knife, a pita and olives in their pocket, and come out after a week with the job done. I guess once you have a state everything gets more complicated, even this.

There was also a woman on board, a red-headed harridan from the Mossad's Paris office who came to make a video of the whole thing, for training later. I didn't like this part—once I threw up when I saw myself in such a movie, what I had done when I was in the heat of it—but there was nothing I could do. The Cabinet wanted it. I think she screwed at least three of the naval commandos en route, maybe even Musa. She reminded me of Nitza. They get so they don't even think it's something special.

After three days we arrived off Tunis. The coast looked just like the Herzliya beach north of Tel Aviv—white, with rolling sand dunes—but also with lots of palm trees like in Gaza. The water smelled the same, too, complete with floating turds and condoms. Civilization had come to the Arabs, too.

We lolled around just beyond the territorial waters for one more day, until Jerusalem gave final approval. They always do that, arguing about "advisability" to the very last moment. I'm told this time it was really close—some leftist kibbutz ministers got cold feet as usual. It seems there were peace overtures afoot—maybe even my father was involved. He used to serve as a go-between in such things, even when he was minister-without-portfolio for *shmutz*, because his word was good, for both sides. Apparently the overtures were supposed to be going through the king of Morocco, or so said the Mossad harridan (these *shoo-shoo* people always liked to boast how much they knew during operations), so a take-down almost on the king's doorstep would make him look bad.

"Make him look bad! His mother!" Musa shouted. "Goddamned *Arabush*. Look bad! He lets them stay in Rabat, doesn't he? Look bad!"

The Mossad woman said it was all crap anyway. Peace, shmeace. "No one will ever vote for a government that tried to talk to these bastards. Would *you* vote for them? People who kill children?" She addressed first me, then Musa, and without waiting for an answer launched into a political analysis of the next elections, and Musa and I excused ourselves. These Mossad people, once they've killed, they think they can tell the future, maybe even make it happen.

At last we got the green light. ("Light Unto the Nations," I recall, was the code word.) The naval commandos went in first, looking like huge frogs bulging with malignant tumors everywhere, then piled into their ugly gray-black dinghies and rowed ashore; in about an hour they clicked back their OK. Finally we went in ourselves, in two rubber dinghies, eight men in each.

As we detached from the *Dabboor* boats I pulled out Ilan's photo and stuck it in the breast pocket of my Nomex coverall. It was a breach of security, but I don't know, he was my son, and I still hadn't cried over him, not even at the funeral. I don't know if it was because I had turned into a monster who felt nothing any more, like Nitza once said, or maybe simply because the moment Yossi told me the news, I knew I would be in on the retribution and already felt under operational rules. But then, in one way or another, I had been under operational rules ever since I'd joined up, nineteen years earlier, just as my father had been, ever since he had arrived in Palestine, more than a half-century ago.

It took us two-and-a-half hours to get to shore—we couldn't use engines, not even the small electrical ones, so we let the naval commandos tug us in, swimming through the muck with their extra-large flippers on. On the beach at Ras Carthage there was already a short line of cars waiting with Mossad people, all smoking, all trying desperately to appear nonchalant. We got in and drove in VW vans down the coast, 25 miles south to Tunis, and arrived at Abu Salaam's villa at 1:40 A.M. Then we waited, on a side street, lying on the floor of the vans.

Abu Salaam came home an hour later with his wife and son, in a long black Mercedes flying the Palestinian flag. His three bodyguards—two Liby-

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ans with curly hair, and a huge American black—jumped out and spread out in front of the villa, Kalashnikovs at the ready, like in a Charles Bronson movie. He dashed from the Mercedes into the house, followed by his wife and son. The month before, a splinter faction that had been voted off the Palestine National Council tried to take revenge on him, so I guess he was being extra careful.

For an hour after he went in I watched from the van through a little mirror on a stick, waiting for the light to go out in his second-floor window. Every fifteen minutes I clicked once on the radio, and Musa clicked back twice, just to let me know he was there and awake.

Although I tried not to, I couldn't stop myself from taking out Ilan's picture. In the dark his face was a mere blur, just as it was in my memory. The last time I had seen him was five weeks before. I'd been neglecting him lately, mostly because I couldn't stand seeing either Nitza or Yossi, how contented they seemed together—and also because I was sick of saying no to her importunities every time we met. "Yossi doesn't mind," she said. "He told me so when we got married. In the kibbutz everybody screws on the side."

"Not me," I said to her. "I'm from Tel Aviv."

"I thought they screw in Tel Aviv, too, on the side."

"So maybe I don't know," I said, meaning I didn't want to know.

She wasn't the first woman I had known; but then I didn't know that many.

You would think she'd give up after a while, but no; she persisted. So after a while I visited as little as possible, maybe once a month. Also I didn't miss Ilan too much. Except in our letters, we never really got along well. He was a brooding child, wild at times, otherwise a silent loner. On more than one occasion we would sit together, drinking boiled milk in the kibbutz dining hall, not looking at each other, saying almost nothing, waiting until it was time for me to go.

At 3:50 A.M. the light in Abu Salaam's bedroom finally went off. I waited five minutes, listening to the silence, then clicked four on the radio—go. Musa gave a five-click response, and the vans' doors slid open.

As Musa's team deployed on the curb, nearly invisible in their light-absorbing Nomex suits, the Mossad girl strolled over to the Mercedes and shot the sleeping driver with a silenced Beretta in the forehead; then she nodded to us pleasantly, proudly, but we were already racing up the red-tiled stairs of the villa—the door had been blown off its hinges with white plastic under a kevlar-styrofoam limpet (it's amazing how silent this is)—and we were in. I got the two Libyan guards who were dozing in plush green chairs at the foot of the staircase and as we raced up the oak stairs to the second floor (behind me my second-in-command shot the black American, who had appeared from the basement), the door to the bedroom opened and Abu Salaam emerged, his bald head glistening with sweat, a pistol in his hand, a Tokarov. But before he could shoot, a boy rushed out of another bedroom and jumped into his arms, crying. It was his son, a thirteen-year-old blond boy. (Ilan had been a redhead, like Nitza.) The boy shouted something in French to his father, who tried to shake him off, shouting something back; I didn't catch what it was. Intelligence had said the son was Arafat's catamite, but I don't know. He looked like just a boy. With freckles, even, and blue-and-white pajamas.

Musa's voice shouted in my earphone, "Take him down, you donkey!" I felt myself reddening with shame. I was probably a whole five seconds late. I let out a long silenced burst and got them both. Just then his wife appeared in the bedroom door, a small blond with a pinched face, a Kalash in her hand, but my second-in-command got her. As we raced back down the stairs the Mossad team was already clattering up, with their huge suitcases, for documents.

We threw the suitcases and bags into the back of the vans and then the video girl scurried out—it emerged later I had only delayed a second-and-a-half, no big deal—and we scrammed. The entire thing took maybe 31 seconds, from the moment we blew in the door to the moment the last man left the house, a Mossad louse who had dropped his Beretta.

THREE days later I rejoined the *Sayeret*, one rank below what I had before, but who cares. Dada and the guys gave me a little party in his villa, without wives, and after we finished all the Johnny Walker and the Stock 777 we watched the video. I didn't get sick at all, this time. It looked pretty good. Even Musa said so. When Abu Salaam fell off the banister, still clutching the boy, Dada called to me jokingly that maybe now we should start talking to them, now that we could finally understand each other, and everybody laughed almost to tears, me too.

The next day I went back to the kibbutz to tell Nitza. (She had tried to pull strings to see the video, but the PM had said no.) Yossi wasn't home, so after we finished looking at old photos we screwed on the sofa. It wasn't like old times, but it was good enough. Times change, people change, you have to change if you want to live in this place. If you can bring yourself to share your woman, maybe one day you could also let yourself share your land.

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The Great Polish Experiment

George Weigel

CONTRARY to some of the more exuberant expectations bubbling in the wake of the Revolution of 1989, history has been going full blast in Central and Eastern Europe ever since the breaching of the Berlin Wall marked the demise of Stalin's external empire and opened the death watch for Marxism-Leninism in Europe. And despite the best efforts of the fourth estate in the developed democracies to portray the old Warsaw Pact as a political and economic basket case in which great masses of people now look with fond nostalgia on the Communist past, there has been considerable progress toward fulfilling the great expectations of four years ago.

Politically, the turn toward democracy seems secure in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the former East Germany. Not only have the basic institutions of democratic governance been established in these countries; they have proven their tensile strength through a series of elections in which power has been peacefully transferred between contesting parties.

Even more striking has been the economic success registered by several former Soviet satellites. Hungary, which was in the best position to achieve market "takeoff," has continued to attract considerable Western investment. The Czech Republic, which leaped into rapid and comprehensive privatization under the leadership of Prime Minister Václav Klaus, seems poised to turn the corner into a bright economic future. But it is Poland, the test-bed of post-Communist economic "shock therapy," that continues to amaze. For Poland had the highest rate of growth in gross national product in Europe in 1993—not in Central Europe, but in Europe, period (and this despite the protectionism that prevents Polish goods from getting into West European markets).

These striking accomplishments have gone largely unremarked in a West that seems to have lost interest in Central and Eastern Europe—in part, because of some undeniably serious problems that have also beset the region. The same Poland where things seemed to be going so well economically returned two parties of ex-Communists to power in September 1993: a disturbing development anticipated the previous year in both Lithuania and Bulgaria. Czechoslovakia went through a "velvet divorce" on January 1, 1993; and while the Czech Republic is arguably better off today than if it had remained trapped in the protracted agonies of a loveless marriage, it is not at all clear that Slovakia has benefited from its rapid drive for sovereignty.

Despite massive infusions of capital from its far wealthier brethren west of the Elbe River, the former German Democratic Republic has suffered considerable difficulties—including the outbreak of neo-Nazi agitation—in making the transition to democracy and the free market. Romania remains firmly in the control of former Communists whose disentanglement from their previous political and economic views is not self-evidently clear. The late Yugoslavia has, of course, descended into ethnic barbarism and slaughter, but irredentist claims based on ethnic loyalty have also been felt beyond the hinterlands of Southeastern Europe. For example, Hungary (the country that is perhaps farthest along the road to democratic and market consolidation) has gotten itself enmeshed in ethnically-based conflict with two of its neighbors, Romania and Slovakia.

FOR all that they have taken some of the romantic glow off the events of the *annus mirabilis*, 1989, these sundry crises should not have come as a surprise to sober-minded Western observers and diplomats. Our American democracy, after all, did not spring, full-blown, from the brow (or pen) of Thomas Jefferson, or from the pages of Lord Cornwallis's instrument of surrender. Indeed, America went through decades of democratic growing pains that culminated in a sanguinary civil war.

Nor do the difficulties that even the most advanced Central European countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary) have experienced in consolidating their transition to democracy and the free market invalidate the thesis that a revolution of conscience, a genuine moral revolution, preceded and made possible the nonviolent political revolution of 1989. This revolution did not mean the end of history. Rather, it meant the

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restoration of history to its normal rhythms and patterns—which include the possibility, now actualized in every one of these societies, of making a hash of things from time to time.

Throughout the 1980's, whenever one asked the people we used to call "dissidents" what they wanted, one invariably got the same reply: "We want a normal society." And that is precisely what they have gotten. But Central Europe's is a singular normality, which continues to be profoundly shaped and misshaped by the economic, political, social, cultural, and (preeminently) moral detritus of the Communist period, as well as by the glorious experience of tyranny cast off.

Communism wrought tremendous damage, not simply to the physical environment of Central and Eastern Europe, but to its moral ecology as well. And it would have been naive in the extreme to expect that so much damage could be repaired in the twinkling of an eye. Given the colossal destruction Communism wrought on men's souls, as well as on the economies of nations, the truly remarkable thing is that large parts of Central and Eastern Europe have done as well as they have over the past four years.

II

THE experience of Poland, the linchpin of the Revolution of 1989, exemplifies in sharp relief this contemporary experience of a "peculiar normality" in Central and Eastern Europe. Happily, and in contrast to the deprecatory reporting on the Third Polish Republic that has too often characterized elite Western media commentary since 1989, we now have a sympathetic and insightful analysis of the trials and triumphs of Poland (and other countries in the region) in *The Birth of Freedom*, by the veteran *Newsweek* correspondent Andrew Nagorski.*

Nagorski's book is all the more persuasive because he understands that the crux of the post-Communist problem for the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe lies, as the Czech President, Václav Havel, once put it, in "driving totalitarianism out of our souls." Accordingly, Nagorski is particularly acute in depicting the habits of the heart that have made the processes of democratic and free-market consolidation so difficult for so many people, even amid palpable political and economic successes.

Imagine, for example, building a functioning market economy in a country where, for decades, bribing officials was the only way to extract a modicum of service, and where cheating on purchases or taxes was regarded as almost a "noble activity," virtually a "patriotic duty."

Imagine, further, the difficulties of even the most energetic and tenacious entrepreneur in a situation in which commercial banking had not existed for over 40 years; in which most people had no concept of the value of time; in which there was no such thing as a "customer"; in which commercial law did not exist; in which there was no stock market; in which very few people had any notion of wealth-creation; and in which accounting was one of the "creative arts" (as Nagorski whimsically, and accurately, puts it): little wonder that, in these rude circumstances, flagrantly corrupt business practices—which have led to Poland's being labeled the "Wild East"—have gone hand-in-hand with a great outburst of economic energy.

Imagine, too, a country in which (as Poland's first post-Communist interior minister once said) "the police were armed to fight the society, but not to do police work": little wonder that a crime wave has left its imprint on Polish society after 1989. And imagine, finally, a country in which "tolerance" and "fraternity" were ubiquitous terms of Communist Newspeak: little wonder that, in the new climate of freedom, crude expressions of racial, ethnic, or ideological deprecation are not infrequently encountered among otherwise decent people.

The politics of freedom have proved every bit as tangled as Poland's rapid transition to the market. And here, it is not simply the Communist period but the Polish national experience over the past two centuries that has required the Poles to play political catch-up ball ever since 1989.

Nagorski quotes Ewa Letowska, post-Communist Poland's first human-rights commissioner and ombudsman, on the distinctive history whose unhappy byproducts rapidly became evident after the Communist crackup:

> This is a country that missed the benefits of the 19th century. It was in the 19th century that democratic institutions took shape in the world: the administrative court system developed in France, parliamentary democracy was consolidated in England, the period of conquests ended in the United States, and a more decent order prevailed. But Poland was partitioned in the 19th century, and all those institutions were foreign.

Poland also missed the experience of forming and sustaining broad-based political parties. And that gap—coupled with the historic Polish tendency to divide already fragile parties over relatively minor points of ideology—has given the people who ran Poland under Communism, and who then inherited its only existing political machinery, a comparative political advantage.†

That the ex-Communists (or "post-Commu-

* Simon & Schuster, 320 pp., $23.00.

† This advantage was further amplified by infusions of cash from Swiss bank accounts established pre-1989 by a prudent *nomenklatura* elite. Nagorski notes that, "On January 29, 1990, when the Polish Communist party officially dissolved itself, banks reported that they were holding $11.5 million in its name, mostly in Swiss francs. On February 27, 1991, when a law on the confiscation of the party's property came into force, the accounts showed only $4,000 left."

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nists," as they are usually called in Poland) retained their organizational and financial assets is itself a classic example of the dilemma of unintended consequences in politics. Shortly after the June 1989 elections that brought Tadeusz Mazowiecki to power as Poland's first postwar non-Communist Prime Minister, the decision was taken to draw a "thick line" between past and present: to get on with the post-Communist future without a serious legal (i.e., criminal) accounting for the depredations of the Communist period. However one sorts out the merits and demerits of this bitterly controversial strategy, it is clear that one of its results was to enable ex-Communists to recoup their political position in fairly short order.

Poland's traditional difficulties in mastering the virtue of prudence have helped turn the Poles into one of history's most romantic peoples; that cultural predisposition has also led to catastrophe for the Polish state on more than one occasion. The great question today is how Poland's current democratic experiment might merge the moral passions that made possible the Revolution of 1989 with the prudence that is essential to securing the future in freedom.

III

THAT, in part, was what was being contested in the parliamentary elections last September that left the ex-Communists firmly in control. And while this outcome was not altogether reassuring, neither did it represent a *volte-face* on the road to a secure Polish democracy.

Actually, what happened in September was less the result of a dramatic rejection of the economic and political reforms of the past four years than of a poorly conceived new electoral law. The goal of the new law was to break the pattern of party fragmentation that had made coalition-building such a difficult business since 1989. The instruments adopted were 5- and 8-percent thresholds for individual parties or coalitions of parties to enter the parliament, and "bonus seats" for the big winners among the larger parties.

The thresholds worked: the new parliament has seven parties and groups, down from 29 in the previous legislature. But the "bonus-seat" plan backfired badly, giving the two leading ex-Communist parties, the Democratic Left Alliance and the Polish Peasants' Party, 66 percent of the seats in the all-important Sejm (the lower house) on the basis of a mere 36 percent of the vote.

It would, therefore, be a considerable exaggeration to suggest that the September elections signaled a fundamental reversal in Poland's post-Communist politics. Still, the ex-Communists did get 36 percent of the vote. What explains that striking phenomenon in a country of which Stalin cracked that introducing the Poles to Communism was like "fitting a cow with a saddle"? Conversations I had in Poland, a month after the elections, suggested that four factors were in play.

The first and, by virtually all accounts, the most decisive was what might be termed "social insecurity," especially among the elderly, the peasants, and workers in the threatened smokestack industries. Although we are not accustomed to thinking of them as such, Communist societies were in fact forms of the welfare state: they promised, and delivered, jobs, health care, and retirement benefits. Even if the jobs were useless, the health care grossly inadequate, and the pensions paltry, they were there; and, the *nomenklatura* excepted, society's benefits were distributed equally (which, to be sure, meant equally poorly) throughout the great mass of the population.

Hence the very success of Poland's economic reform has created difficult cultural and political circumstances. The courageous decision to make the Polish currency convertible—the *sine qua non* of the positive growth rates of the past eighteen months or so—inevitably meant that pensions and other forms of fixed income depreciated in value. The successes enjoyed by many small (and larger) businesses may have created a far wider availability of consumer goods; but this also meant the beginning of significant income disparities. Viewed from a macro level, Poland's estimated 5-percent 1993 growth rate looks impressive indeed; but from the ranks of the unemployed (13 percent or so, at present), reform can look like just another scam.

In general, too many Poles continue to regard economics as a zero-sum game; too few understand how much has been accomplished in a relatively brief period of market transition; too many evince a certain nostalgia for the bogus "equality" of the Communist period; and many are genuinely, and understandably, frightened about their place, or lack thereof, in the brave new world of the market. Fear of freedom, to put it bluntly but accurately, was a significant factor in the ex-Communist comeback.

Several observers, most notably Abraham Brumberg, have argued that the September elections also represented a sharp, even biting, rejection of the public role of the Catholic Church since the Revolution of 1989—a rejection that Brumberg interprets as a mark of maturation on the part of Polish society. The reality is both more complex and more interesting.

Among some voters, there was surely disagreement with the Church's substantive positions on issues like abortion, voluntary religious education in public schools, the reinstitution of the chaplaincy in the armed forces, and the regulation of the electronic media. Yet when one considers that levels of Catholic practice in Poland remain extraordinarily high, it seems more plausible to suggest that, for the majority of the electorate, the quarrel was not so much with the Church's substantive positions as it was with the style of the

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Church's interventions in public life—its perceived lack of democratic etiquette in advancing those positions under the new circumstances of freedom. (More about that in a moment.)

THE aforementioned financial and organizational advantages enjoyed by the parties of ex-Communists are the third factor cited by veteran Polish political observers trying to parse the motivations at work in September's voting. But to these advantages in political hardware should also be added the unavoidable reality of self-interest.

Pre-1989 Poland was not one vast Nottingham Forest, in which virtually everyone played Robin Hood to General Jaruzelski's sheriff. The Polish Communist party had, at the end, about two million members; and when one considers that each of those members had a family as well as a network of friends and connections, one begins to see how a powerful interest group, committed to retaining its accustomed position of privilege in society, quite naturally formed, even in the wake of the Communist party's official demise.

Moreover, this was an interest group whose key members had had their country's only experience of party discipline: another asset in playing the game of democratic politics. Further, the ex-Communists had the advantages conveyed (at least over the short term) by a cynicism that masked itself as pragmatism. While the parties of the old Solidarity coalition were splintering over interesting, but often esoteric, points of political philosophy, the ex-Communists presented themselves as experienced and practical managers who had learned from the errors of the past and whose heads were not stuck in the clouds of theory.

The fourth factor in the defeat of the parties which might have been expected to form the second government led by Hanna Suchocka was, of course, those parties' own mistakes in office over the past four years. The crackup of Solidarity's grand coalition, within a year of the *annus mirabilis*; the subsequent machinations of Lech Walesa, which resulted in his election to the Polish presidency but at the price of a further rift within the old camp of the anti-Communist resistance; President Walesa's inability, which many attribute to an overweening ego, to get along with several Prime Ministers; a first post-Communist election law that took proportional representation to virtually unparalleled altitudes of silliness, and the resulting instability of governing coalitions; the bitterness of parliamentary rows over a host of issues, including abortion; the failure to explain to the broad mass of the public, in a persuasive way, the imperatives of economic reform—all of this left a bad taste in many mouths, not least because of the high hopes that had been raised by the resilience and political ecumenicity of the Solidarity resistance throughout the 1980's.

And so ex-Communists are now in firm control of the Polish parliament, only four years after the Revolution of 1989. This is galling (and, to many Poles, embarrassing), but it will, most probably, not be fatal to Polish democracy or to the consolidation of a market economy in Poland. Excessive spending by the new government—Polish COLA's, so to speak—could set off an inflationary spiral; hard decisions involving useless smokestack industries may be deferred; rates of economic growth may slow; there may be pressures on electronic media that have not been adequately privatized; and the ex-*nomenklatura* network could gradually insinuate itself more thoroughly into the institutions of business, labor, culture, and governance. But Poland seems to have made a firm decision for democracy. And too many people have benefited from the (admittedly rugged) economic reforms of the past four years to imagine that a return to any form of command economy is possible.

Poland, in short, is quite probably going to make it: and one of the main reasons for that is the continued vitality, within a changing situation, of the Catholic Church.

IV

HARD by the church of the Sisters of the Visitation on Krakówskie Przedmiescie, a broad avenue leading into Warsaw's reconstructed Old Town, there is a great bronze statue whose granite pedestal reads: "*Stefan Kardynal Wyszynski Prymas Polski*"—Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, Primate of Poland. The cardinal is seated and is wearing, not the Renaissance robes of a politically astute cardinal-regent, but the liturgical vestments of a bishop celebrating Mass. His face combines sternness with confidence, and reflects a deep faith tested by a great sorrow.

Cardinal Wyszynski will loom large in any history of 20th-century Christianity, indeed of 20th-century Europe. If Poland was the key to the collapse of the Yalta imperial system; and if, as virtually everyone in Poland attests, the trigger for the nonviolent revolution of conscience that made Solidarity possible was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland in June 1979—then the man most singularly responsible for building the kind of Church that could produce both John Paul II and the millions who greeted him on his triumphant return to his Polish homeland was Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski.

Wyszynski died in 1981 and Polish Catholicism has been struggling with his legacy ever since. In order to preserve the integrity of the Church against the Communist regime's relentless efforts to penetrate it, Cardinal Wyszynski ran a very tight ship. Debates and disagreements were aired strictly behind closed doors; in public, the Church spoke with one voice, the voice of the primate. The Wyszynski Church—authoritarian, unified,

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disciplined, intensely patriotic, not given to great intellectual speculations, deeply committed to fostering popular (meaning, primarily, Marian) piety, resistant to internal changes that might provide the regime an opening to make mischief (or worse)—was, most Poles admit, the right kind of Church for the period of the great cardinal's leadership (1948-81). In those hard days, the Church was the custodian of Polish nationhood, during yet another alien occupation; and Cardinal Wyszynski played, to the hilt, the ancient role of the primate as *interrex*—the guardian of the nation during an interim period between legitimate rulers.

But what about the Church's role today? How can the Church honor Wyszynski's legacy while transcending it? How can the Church deliberately break the monopoly of institutional virtue it enjoyed for 50 years? In the aftermath of the Revolution of 1989, the Church's leadership believed, correctly, that it had been a major factor in Poland's 50 years of resistance to two occupying totalitarian powers; and it was eager to return to "normal." But what was "normal"? The Church's established position in the interwar republic dominated by Marshal Józef Pilsudski? That seemed "normal" to some Church leaders, but neither normal nor appropriate to others, who had more thoroughly internalized the Second Vatican Council's teaching on religious freedom and the constitutional state. The "normality" of the Church in Western Europe, where theologians engaged in all sorts of speculations and the Church was a cultural ward of the state, but Sunday Mass attendance figures hovered around 10 percent? Nobody in Polish Catholicism wanted that. What, then, was the model?

There is now an impressive consensus among many Church leaders that the tack taken in the immediate post-Communist period was clumsy, inappropriate, and ineffective. The omnipresence of the Church at occasions ranging from great events of state to the opening of a new Warsaw Burger King reduced prayer and religious ceremonial to trivialities—even obtrusive trivialities.

Nor did a Church leadership accustomed simply to laying down the law take easily to the forms and styles of democratic etiquette. It was not the case that most Poles bitterly disagreed with the Church's positions on a host of fevered public issues; but they wanted the Church to ask, to persuade, to engage in a genuine exchange of views rather than to demand. The issue was not the creation of a "democratic Church"; the issue was the religious leadership's capacity to embody a public Church that was not a partisan Church—and a public Church manifestly committed to the arts of democratic persuasion and dialogue.

In short, the people of Poland seemed to want the kind of Church described by John Paul II in his 1990 encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, when the Polish pope wrote that "The Church only proposes; she imposes nothing."

THE historic turn toward this kind of Church accelerated in January 1993, when the entire Polish episcopate came to Rome for the visits that all Catholic bishops are required to make every five years. By that time, the inability of senior members of the episcopate to define a new style of public engagement had caused the Church's public position to erode badly: from the most trusted institution in the country, according to opinion polling, it had now slipped to fourth place, behind the army, the ombudsman, and the police. Clearly, something had to be done, and in January, John Paul began to do it.

In his address to the group of bishops led by Cardinal Wyszynski's successor as primate, Cardinal Józef Glemp (who seemed to have found the transition "beyond Wyszynski" especially difficult), the pope flatly and unambiguously rejected ecclesiastical partisanship, stating that "the Church is not a political party nor is she identified with any political party; she is above them, open to all people of good will, and no political party can claim the right to represent her."

There were, then, to be no more attempts to align the Church with particular parties or candidates, and, to get down to local cases, no more priests instructing parishioners how to vote (which would require discipline of both priests and parishioners, for in peasant areas it was often the latter who asked for electoral marching orders). The modern social doctrine of the Church, not nostalgic visions of a romanticized Polish past, would be the substance of the Church's public stance. Persuasion and argument, public rather than sectarian in character, would be the *modus operandi*. For John Paul these were matters of principle, not of pragmatic accommodation. And they soon began to have an impact on the Church's approach to public life.

Several months after the visits to Rome, the new approach was put to the test in an election for the position of general secretary of the bishops' conference. Two candidates supported by Cardinal Glemp were defeated, and the victor was a younger bishop, Tadeusz Pieronek, who had had a long experience in consultative Church bodies and who was clearly identified with the "John Paul II wing" of the Polish Church.*

Three months after Pieronek's accession to the general secretaryship of the bishops' conference, the episcopate issued a national pastoral letter on the forthcoming elections, read in all churches on Sunday, June 27. The letter called Polish Catholics to a prudent exercise of the responsibilities of citizenship, but, following the line of

* Difficult though some Westerners evidently find it to believe, John Paul is regarded by some Polish ecclesiastics today as a dangerous innovator, even a radical.

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John Paul's January address, insisted that the Church could not be identified with any party, coalition of parties, or candidate. And, in a challenge to the clericalism and anticlericalism that have been staple features of Polish culture for centuries, the letter emphasized the primary role of the laity in carrying the Church's social teaching into the public square.

Three weeks after the pastoral letter, Bishop Pieronek engaged in a wide-ranging public conversation with the former dissident intellectual, Adam Michnik, that sprawled over three pages of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the leading Polish daily that Michnik now edits. The dialogue—which centered on the relationship between moral truth and democratic practice—was candid, open, and decent-spirited: the antithesis of the ecclesiastical authoritarianism and intellectual/journalistic anticlerical secularism of the past. Michnik, who had been one of the Church's sharpest critics since 1989 (having previously been a key figure in the rapprochement between the Polish intelligentsia and the Church that helped make the resistance of the 1980's possible), pronounced himself much impressed, as indeed he should have been. One would look long and hard to find such an intense conversation, conducted at such depth and on such serious issues, in any American newspaper.

The momentum toward the fulfillment of the "Wyszynski Church" in the "John Paul II Church" will continue, according to any number of indicators. Next spring, the Polish episcopate will elect a new president; among the leading candidates is the Archbishop of Gniezno, Henryk Muszynski, who has been the key episcopal figure in confronting Polish anti-Semitism past and present. New Church-related institutions are being created, including the Center for Political Thought in Cracow—a think tank dedicated to bringing Anglo-American political and economic thinking into active conversation with the social teaching of John Paul II.

Venerable Catholic journals, including the Warsaw-based monthly, *Wiez* ("Link"), and the Cracow weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny* ("Universal Weekly"), have also taken up the cause of Polish/American Catholic intellectual dialogue. The Dominican publishing house, *w drodze*, recently put out Polish translations of works by two American Catholic thinkers, Michael Novak and Richard John Neuhaus (one of Novak's books, *Freedom with Justice: Catholic Thought and Liberal Institutions*, was, in October, a leading best-seller in Poland*). Indeed, there is a cadre of Polish Catholic intellectuals, clergy, and lay activists who find in America the intriguing possibility of a nonpartisan but public Church in a thoroughly modern but intensely religious society.

THE Church in Poland is, like Polish society at large, living out a fascinating question: how can a liberal democratic state and a free economy be created on the foundations of an intact Catholic culture? That has never been done before, but there are reasons to be hopeful about Poland's chances of pulling it off. For the past two centuries, in Catholic societies (or pluralistic societies with a significant Catholic population), transitions to democracy and the free market were undertaken in the face of the official Church's professed nervousness about the limited constitutional state, religious liberty, and capitalism. But at the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholicism made a decisive and historic break with its traditional fondness for the altar-and-throne arrangements of the *ancien régime*. And in John Paul II's bold 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, the magisterium of the Church endorsed the "free economy" as an expression of the creativity of human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

All this means that the great Polish experiment will not be conducted with the society looking nervously over its shoulder, so to speak, at a skeptical Church. Rather, the vision of the free society developed by John Paul in *Centesimus Annus* is ahead of the curve in the contemporary Polish debate, and thus can act as a magnet toward successful reforms, rather than as a brake on them.

No one knows, of course, whether Poland will make it in the 1990's. American indifference, West European trade barriers, Russian turmoil, and the deep wounds inflicted on Polish psyches and souls by Communism may yet combine to frustrate the best hopes of Poland's democrats, entrepreneurs, and reforming Church leaders. But, against the historical grain, I am inclined to optimism. I am even inclined to think that the successful establishment of democracy and a free economy in Poland will take place through, not around, the Catholic Church. Poland has changed, dramatically, and for the better, since 1989. So has Polish Catholicism. And out of those changes may yet come a distinctive model of the free society, where vibrant religious conviction sets the foundation on which may be pursued liberty, justice, and prosperity for all.

* The Dominicans, no slouches at marketing, gave the translation a more provocative title, *Liberalism: Friend or Enemy of the Church?* The liberalism in question here is, of course, Tocquevillian and Actonian, not Clintonesque.

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How to Read Philip Roth

Hillel Halkin

And what will COMMENTARY make of this confession? I can't imagine it's good for the Jews.

—Peter Tarnopol, in *My Life as a Man* by PHILIP ROTH

PHILIP ROTH's grievance against COMMENTARY, sardonically vented in several of his novels and especially in a lengthy scene in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) involving a literary critic named Milton Appel (based on the late Irving Howe), goes back at least as far as December 1972, when Howe wrote an essay in these pages titled "Philip Roth Reconsidered." This essay followed the publication of Roth's novella, *The Breast*, which Howe called "boring" and "tasteless," but his main target was the best-selling *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969).

Howe—who had written a laudatory review of Roth's first book of stories about Jewish suburbia, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959)—tore into *Portnoy* savagely. It was, he said, "an assemblage of gags," "a shriek of excess," "a vulgar book . . . full of contempt for Jewish life" and "afflicted with claustrophobia of voice and vision," a sell-out of Roth's talent for the sake of what Flaubert had scathingly referred to as an "audience," as opposed to dedicated "readers." Aimed by one of America's most respected intellectuals at a young writer with a high Flaubertian sense of his vocation, the remarks stung Roth badly.

Rereading Howe's essay today, one is struck by both its prescience and its unfairness. Blaming a writer for not being some other writer is rarely a relevant response to his work, and Howe was in effect blaming Roth for not being an entire school of other writers—that is, for not working in the grain of social realism that Howe himself regarded as the apogee, and perhaps even the *raison d'être*, of the modern novel. What was wrong, he wrote, with *Portnoy's Complaint*, whose sex- and self-obsessed narrator "never shuts up," was its lack of a fleshed-out world of social relationships in which its protagonist could be located. Of all its characters, only Alexander Portnoy himself was "allowed the human attribute of a history," to which everyone else in the book was a mere foil, having no "reality or persuasiveness." That this might be the fictional point about Portnoy, a compulsively clownish neurotic trapped in an ego that does not allow for the reality of others, did not interest Howe much.

And yet at the same time, Howe's essay was perceptive in pointing out that, if the real Philip Roth were to stand up, he would be the author not of the realistically textured title story of *Goodbye, Columbus*, nor of his next two novels, *Letting Go* (1962) and *When She Was Good* (1967)—both ploddingly social-realistic stories set in the Midwest—but of *Portnoy*. The essay's opening section in fact was a reappraisal of *Goodbye, Columbus* in which, while still granting it "the lucidities of definition," Howe concluded, "I doubt that Roth is really interested [even there] in a close and scrupulous observance of social life." On the contrary, he declared:

> *Goodbye, Columbus* rests in the grip of an imperious will prepared to wrench, twist, and claw at its materials in order to leave upon them the scar of its presence—as if a work of fiction were a package that needed constantly to be stamped with the signature of self.

Perhaps Howe was reading his judgments of *Portnoy* back into *Goodbye, Columbus* and perhaps he was insightfully right about it; the salient thing was his recognition, at a time when *Portnoy* was still one of a kind among Roth's books, that *it* was what counted. And about this, if nothing else, Roth would have agreed. Both in his fiction and in interviews he often has referred to *Portnoy*—a novel that few critics today would consider one of his best—as the book that put an end to his literary apprenticeship and marked his true birth as an author.

"Portnoy wasn't a character for me, he was an explosion," Roth told the *Paris Review* in 1984. "This phenomenon is known to students of literary survey courses as the writer changing his style." Indeed, as Howe saw, the truly portentous feature of *Portnoy* was not its scandalous subject matter, although this was what had helped make it a best-seller—the masturbation, the oral and anal sex, the wicked caricatures of an aggressively overprotective Jewish mother and a constipatedly passive Jewish father, the narrator's acting-out of Jewish male fantasies about Gentile women—but rather its less spectacular *subject*, the authorial self. For it was to be this self, not previously dealt with directly in Roth's fiction, that soon became his almost sole concern, pushing all else to the margins.

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NOT all at once, though. Just as Roth had spent the first half of the 60's dutifully producing *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good*, which even Irving Howe grudgingly admitted were marked by "tokens of struggle with the materials of American life," so, even after the liberating effect of *Portnoy*, he sought to maintain for a while longer the pretense that his fictional interests extended beyond the immediate world of a single Newark-born Jewish writer. The result was two disasters, the worst of all his twenty books to date: *Our Gang* (1971), a collection of lampoons of President Nixon and his administration that Howe rightly called "a reversion to the silliness of the high-school humor column," and *The Great American Novel* (1973), a soggily comic yarn about an imaginary baseball league whose players bore the names of Babylonian deities and appeared to have been jointly inspired by "Casey at the Bat" and Ripley's *Believe It or Not*. Between these two books came a slim divertissement, *The Breast* (1972), written after most but not all of *The Great American Novel* had been finished.

While *The Breast* was a minor and not-much-noticed work, it marked a decisive moment in Roth's career. Because it is, as its text acknowledges, clearly modeled on Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, *The Breast* is easily regarded as a literary exercise. Yet even so, it is an exercise that departs significantly from the exercise book; for what strikes one most about its narrator, David Kepesh, an English professor mysteriously turned overnight into a huge mammary gland, is that—unlike Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect in Kafka—his fate is less than an unmitigated disaster for him.

At first, awakening in the hospital to find himself a sightless "organism of a spongy consistency with the general shape of a football or a dirigible," Kepesh is horrified and desperate to regain his former state. Yet as he comes to explore the erogenous advantages of his new condition, which shows no signs of going away, he grows increasingly reconciled to it, until the story ends with the manic resolution:

> And I will be deliriously happy. *And I will be deliriously happy.* Remember Gulliver among the Brobdingnags? How the king's maidservants had him walk out on their nipples for the fun of it? *He* didn't think it was fun, poor little fellow. But then he was a humane English physician, a child of the Age of Reason, living quite precariously in an outlandish land of giants; but this, my friend, is the Land of Opportunity in the Age of Self-Fulfillment, and I am David Alan Kepesh, the Breast, and I will live by my own lights!

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the opportunities for Freudian interpretation offered by *The Breast*. Indeed, if one relates it to the frantic onanism of the young Portnoy, the opportunities start well short of Freud, since the belief that masturbation can result in the sprouting of female breasts was a part of the folklore of Roth's American boyhood. But although a psychoanalytic understanding of the story is certainly feasible, *The Breast* can also be read as a purely literary manifesto.

LET us recapitulate.

A third-generation American Jew, born in 1933, grows up in New Jersey, goes off to college in the early 50's, and discovers that he is a writer. Like most young writers, he begins by producing stories about his own experience, and typically, too, this includes the experience of escaping the nets of convention and respectability that his native environment had spread at his feet. These stories are published in his first book, whose genuine literary merits and real or perceived attacks on middle-class Jewish life in America attract enough attention, both admiring and angry, to launch him successfully on his way.

In order to remain true to type, the young writer, having penned his farewell to the parochial world he was raised in, should now put it behind him and plunge fictionally into "real life"—which is to say, in this case, into the vast and alluring continent of Gentile America. And so he does, writing first a university-campus novel in which Jews and non-Jews discover each other socially and sexually, and then a novel set in a small Midwestern town in which Jews do not appear at all. Neither is much of a commercial or an artistic success. Although there is nothing terribly wrong with them, there is nothing terribly right, either. What they most lack is that feeling given us by the best writing that no force on earth could have prevented it from being written.

Our young writer, even more acutely aware of this failing than are his critics, broods over it and realizes its cause: he has left behind unfinished business, both in New Jersey and in his own psyche, that must be gone back to and dealt with before he can move on undistractedly to bigger things—namely, the true *inner* story of his childhood, adolescence, and revolt against bourgeois values, which so far has never been told. Of course, "true" does not mean factual; rather, in the novel he now composes, he invents an outrageous "autobiography" for himself whose outward scurrilousness is the fictional correlative of the states of soul he wishes to portray. The book, the feverish energy and excitement of which are communicated instantly to its readers, grossly offends some of them, titillates many others, and makes him rich and famous.

All is now ostensibly well and good. Our writer, no longer so young, has exorcised the ghosts of his past and can get on with the temporarily suspended task of addressing Big Subjects. And since he has become something of a literary celebrity and none but the biggest subject is big enough, he proceeds to write a book about the President of the United States and another about the American National Pastime, to which he gives a title, no less audacious for being self-mocking,

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that tells us of the enormity of his ambition. Both are quite awful. Indeed, the second is so awful that before he can force himself to finish it he has to stop and compose a slender penitential work. It says to us, this coded public confession:

> I, David Alan Kepesh, also known to my readers as Philip Roth, hereby acknowledge, after all my unsuccessful attempts to prove otherwise, that nothing interests me enough to write well about it except my own self and whatever directly impinges on me. I represent this self as a giant breast, a metaphor that I have chosen both because the breast is an organ that receives stimuli from a world it can only perceive in the form of its own limited sensations, and because these sensations are often intense and almost always fascinating to the breast itself. I am aware that in thus circumscribing myself as a writer I am inflicting on myself a kind of punishment. Yet not only is this punishment justly deserved for the sin of bad writing I have committed, I believe that only by accepting it can I free my talents to fulfill themselves. Let other writers be eyes and ears, glued to the keyhole of the world; I will be a breast and nothing more.

It is a vow that—embracing the author Irving Howe is soon to accuse him of being—he will keep.

2.

> From 1962 until 1967, Mr. Tarnopol was the patient of the psychoanalyst Dr. Otto Spielvogel. . . . Mr. Tarnopol is considered by Dr. Spielvogel to be among the nation's top young narcissists in the arts.
>
> —from *My Life as a Man*

ROTH's next work after *The Great American Novel* was *My Life as a Man* (1974). His best book up to that point, it is divided into two parts. The first, called "Useful Fictions," consists of two stories about a character named Nathan Zuckerman, who would subsequently reappear in five more of Roth's novels. Part II, called "My True Story," is an "autobiographical narrative" by a writer named Peter Tarnopol, who is also represented as being the creator of Nathan Zuckerman and the author of the stories in Part I, which several of the characters in Part II read and discuss. Still another character in "My True Story" is Tarnopol's psychoanalyst, Dr. Otto Spielvogel, who had previously appeared in *Portnoy's Complaint*.

And so, in introducing into his novels such fictional devices as multiple authorship and metatextual commentary, Philip Roth joined the ranks of the postmodernists, with whom he had not been previously identified. And yet in reading *My Life as a Man* and the novels that came after it, one has no particular sense of outside influences. Presumably Roth, an extremely well-read writer, was not entirely self-inspired in once again undergoing "the phenomenon known as the writer changing his style," but the impression given by his later books is that, had post-modernism not existed, he would have been quite capable of inventing aspects of it by himself.

This is so because he seems to have been drawn to its techniques for purely practical reasons. There is in him little of the philosophical curiosity, the fascination with physical and epistemological relativity, that has animated deconstructors of traditional fictional forms like Jorge Luis Borges or Italo Calvino. Sometimes he likes to present us with one of those puzzles about reality and illusion, comparable to sets of facing mirrors in which we are asked to find the original image, that postmodernism is so fond of; but even when he has confused us in regard to which of his characters is imagining or being imagined by which, the world remains for his Nathan Zuckermans and Peter Tarnopols a reasonably solid and taken-for-granted place.

Roth's reasons for fracturing and restructuring the traditional novel, one might say, are literary-critical and psychological. Two things appear to interest him most: the ways in which a novelist draws on his experience in creating fictional characters, and the ways in which the writing of fiction is analogous to the processes by which we create and sustain our own selves.

Starting with *My Life as a Man*, every work of fiction produced by Roth has been highly "autobiographical," to use an unavoidable word that nevertheless must be put in quotation marks, if for no other reason than that an author's thoughts and fantasies are at least as much a part of his biography as his *curriculum vitae*. Be that as it may, though, all of Roth's subsequent novels have had as their main characters men who not only think many of the same thoughts but who share all or most of the following entries on their CV's: (1) They were born in the 1930's into a newly middle-class, nonobservant but strongly ethnic Jewish family in New Jersey. (2) They have one brother several years younger than themselves with whom they maintain a relationship of fierce sibling rivalry. (3) They have studied English literature in college and become writers. (4) They are the author of a best-selling novel, a book called, in the Nathan Zuckerman series, *Carnovsky*. (5) They were married when young to a non-Jewish American, are now married to a non-Jewish Englishwoman, and have no children. (6) Although they have no ties to the Jewish community, their sense of Jewishness is a vexing personal concern.

All of these details, as well as many others associated with Roth's typical protagonists and their supporting casts, are taken from Roth's own life, albeit sometimes with significant variations. Roth's own brother, for example, is not younger but older—as indeed, in *My Life as a Man*, is Nathan Zuckerman's brother, Sherman, whom Nathan has worshiped as a young boy but loses respect for when Sherman gives up his ambition

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of being a jazz pianist in order to become a middle-class dentist. It is only in Roth's later *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy (1979-83) that the same brother, now called Henry and still a dentist though one who has relinquished a budding career not in music but in acting, appears as Nathan's junior. Henry is featured even more prominently in *The Counterlife* (1986), where it is not entirely clear if he has an independent existence or is Nathan Zuckerman's fictional creation. Which leads one to ask: is it Nathan who has played Jacob to Henry's Esau by stealing his brother's birthright and then further reducing him to a mere creature of his imagination, or is it rather Roth himself, the creator of Nathan, who has in this fashion symbolically become his older brother's older brother?

THESE are the kinds of questions that Roth's fiction deliberately forces on its readers while at the same time warning them, often in an irritatedly superior tone, against the *faux pas* of reading his work autobiographically. *Zuckerman Bound* indeed tells the comically nightmarish story of just such a writer, who suddenly finds himself identified by the public with a fictional figure he has created: "They had mistaken impersonation for confession and were calling out to a character who lived in a book." And yet if Zuckerman has the right to be distinguished from Carnovsky, the case for distinguishing Roth from Zuckerman, or from the other Roth-like characters in his work, is not nearly so clear-cut. After all, *Carnovsky* is a novel that answers in every respect to a description of *Portnoy*, and we all know who wrote *that*.

The truth is that, in his Zuckerman books and other later novels, Roth has played a far subtler and more coquettish game with his readers than his routine disclaimers of autobiographicality suggest. *Of course* his novels are not factual accounts of a real life—few actual autobiographies are strictly that, either; but throughout them he has scattered so many un- or barely altered details from his life that he might be compared to a fugitive who, after deliberately littering his trail with his wallet, his monogrammed handkerchief, his address book, his bankbook, and his calling card, protests that the posse has apprehended the wrong person. Ultimately it may have, if only in the sense that no human being is the sum of his personal possessions; but whatever his motive, the man in question can hardly expect us to believe that he did not intend to be caught.

What, then, *is* Roth's motive? Is it the "narcissism" that Dr. Spielvogel has diagnosed in Peter Tarnopol, a writer immersed in himself even when writing about others? But narcissism, as Dr. Spielvogel knows, is more complicated than that. Psychoanalytically speaking, indeed, it is the least "autobiographical" of personality disorders, one in which the experiences and thwarted emotions of childhood are deeply submerged and replaced by an often dutiful and conforming ego that demands constant recognition and reinforcement to shore up its precarious foundations. Like the novelist, the narcissist is an inveterate inventor of fictional selves; but whereas the characters of the novelist have an autonomous existence, those of the narcissist remain umbilically tied to the "real self" that gave birth to them and of which they are simultaneously a denial and an expression.

If one could therefore imagine for a moment a dedicated "narcissist in the arts," a talented writer of fiction, say, like Peter Tarnopol, one might conceive of him as caring less than other novelists about bestowing independent destinies on his fictional protagonists and more about maintaining them in a dialectical relationship to their creator. He might even wish to make this relationship the central axis of his fiction—but here he would find himself in a paradoxical position, for since as the creator of this fiction he stands outside it, how can the relationship be within it?

At some point in his career, however, Tarnopol might have a revelation. True, he cannot put himself in his own narratives, not even if he writes one called "My True Story," but it is not necessary for him to do so; the reader will do it for him. He is the author of the best-selling *Carnovsky*? Then he need only create a character who is the author of *Carnovsky* too, and even readers with the elementary sophistication to know that Nathan Zuckerman is not Peter Tarnopol—which is to say, nearly everybody—will be unable to keep from wondering what the connection between the two men is.

Of course, in doing so, readers are likely to get things hopelessly jumbled, since the bare facts known to them about the "real" Peter Tarnopol are grossly insufficient for any accurate judgment. Yet by now this hardly matters. On the contrary, the more confusion, the more fun: the relationship has been brought to where Tarnopol wants it, and gossip and the media can be counted on to keep it there by feeding readers the information about him, true or false, that they will introduce on their own into his next novel. And that information will not be about Gentiles in the Midwest, but about a Newark-born Jewish novelist, who perhaps once wrote about such people long ago but realized they were not for him.

3.

> So Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.
>
> —Epigraph to *Operation Shylock*

IT IS thus with a sense of inherent logic that one reads Philip Roth's latest novel, *Operation Shylock*,* in which an author named Philip Roth travels to Jerusalem and meets

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an exact lookalike, named Philip Roth too, who, under the pretense of being the author Philip Roth, is organizing a movement to return the Jews of Israel to the Diaspora. *At last*, the reader may think: no more Portnoys, no more Tarnopols, no more Zuckermans. The masquerade is over.

The guessing game is not, however, even though the three Philip Roths exert different claims on our credulity. Number 1 is the author of the novel, while Number 2, the author *in* the novel, appears to be a semifictional character with a history that can be only partially corroborated. (The Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld, for instance, whom Roth 2 claims to have gone to Jerusalem to interview for the *New York Review of Books*, has confirmed that such an interview took place with Roth 1 but denies other conversations attributed to him in the novel in which the two men supposedly discussed Roth 2's impostor.) As for Roth 3, the "Diasporist," whose existence is attested to solely by Roths 1 and 2, he can be presumed to be wholly fictional.

Indeed, since the element of mystification, though it is great in the opening pages, starts to wear off well before we have finished reading the novel, it might be asked what the point of it is. Suppose that, instead of Philip Roth meeting Philip Roth in Jerusalem, Nathan Zuckerman had met Nathan Zuckerman: would it make a difference?

The answer, one intuitively feels, is: yes. From a literary point of view, though, there is something counterintuitive about such an intuition, since the mere change, if a plausible one, of the name of a character in a novel—calling Proust's Albertine, let us say, "Jacqueline"—should logically be able to change neither the character nor the novel.

What this suggests is that *Operation Shylock*, although it has been treated as a novel by the critics, may not be a novel at all, at least not in the sense of the self-referential fictional narrative that the genre is traditionally conceived of being. Many novelists, of course, mix truth with fiction, and many can be better appreciated with the help of outside knowledge—for example, in the case of Proust, an author who mined his life for fictional material far more exhaustively than Roth, by a familiarity with late 19th- and early 20th-century French social history.

And yet precisely insofar as we read such writers as novelists, the border in them between truth and fiction has no significance. It is aesthetically irrelevant that the female Albertine was actually modeled on Proust's homosexual lover, Alfred Agostinelli, just as—to take a writer temperamentally and stylistically closer to Roth—in the novels of Henry Miller, where the first-person narrator is called "Henry" and has a history much like his author's, we feel no particular need to establish the boundary between the two. In *Operation Shylock*, on the other hand, this same boundary strikes one as crucial, and it is the attempt to determine its exact location, rather than the events of the narrative *per se*, that provides much of the story's suspense. Where the real Philip Roth ends and his imagination begins is precisely what *Operation Shylock* seems to be about.

THERE is perhaps something both unprecedented and oddly heroic about an author's offering himself up as a fictional text in this way. One is reminded of those 19th-century microbe hunters who, unable to find suitable subjects on whom to conduct their investigations, decided to infect themselves—and indeed, by inoculating his life with his own fiction, Roth has formally signed the waiver of release to it that Zuckerman, the author of *Carnovsky*, rails at the world for obtusely thinking it possesses.

Let us imagine for a moment a dedicated Flaubertian reader pondering the passage in *Operation Shylock* in which the author describes suffering a severe mental breakdown caused by the sleeping pill Halcion, and writes of being helped through the crisis by a friend from Boston whose name, like Aharon Appelfeld's, is that of a real person. Does our reader—wondering whether this episode might be a true one that could explain Philip Roth 2's encounter with Philip Roth 3 in Jerusalem not as Philip Roth 1's fictional invention but as an actual, drug-induced delusion—reread it several times with exquisite attention, consider it in the light of the book as a whole, and come to a literary conclusion? No, he goes to the Boston phone book, looks up Philip Roth's friend, and calls to ask whether Roth had a Halcion reaction and what its symptoms were.

One seems to be dealing here with that thin line between grandiose self-assertion and self-renunciation—two ostensibly opposed postures that share in common a relinquishment of all claims to privacy—that has been known to characterize saints and religious ascetics, categories with which Roth has not been associated. Certainly, however, the element of self-sacrifice in his writing, first unsympathetically noted by Howe twenty years ago, has been as real as the element of self-inflation. A highly gifted character sketcher (he has drawn some wonderfully realized portraits, such as that of E.I. Lonoff in *The Ghost Writer*, 1979), he has curbed his powers austerely; and as his work has unfolded inwardly in all its ego-directedness, it has revealed a deepening sense of resignation which has, as Howe wrote more prophetically than empirically at the time, "programmatically denied itself the vision of major possibilities."

For although Roth's more recent novels with their many alter egos tell us that we are indeed the copyrighted authors of ourselves, and that our fictional techniques resemble those called by psychologists identification, incorporation, introjection, denial, repression, sublimation, projection, dissociation, and integration, their bot-

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tom line is that, as self-creators, we are not the Emersonian demiurge that a Portnoy or a David Kepesh aspires to be but rather artistic failures. We work with materials that are given us in advance and over which we have little control, our manipulations of them are clumsy and subject to innumerable constraints, and the final product, if there is one, is rarely whole or convincing. "Being Zuckerman," says the still-narcissistic but chastened protagonist of *The Counterlife* at the novel's end,

> is one long performance and the very opposite of what is thought of as *being oneself.* In fact, those who most seem to be themselves appear to me people impersonating what they think they might like to be, believe they ought to be, or wish to be taken to be by whoever is setting standards. So in earnest are they that they don't even recognize that being in earnest *is the act.* For certain self-aware people, however, this is not possible: to imagine themselves, living their own real, authentic, or genuine life, has for them all the aspects of a hallucination.

This last sentence sounds like nothing so much as a proposal for *Operation Shylock*, in which the author's *doppelgänger* is both a sequel to and a reversal of Zuckerman's brother Henry in *The Counterlife*. Like Henry, who abandons his family and dental practice and goes off to live as a pioneer on a religious Israeli settlement on the West Bank, Roth's Jerusalem double is a man who, in middle age and with little warning, is possessed by an urgent sense of Jewish mission; unlike Zuckerman's brother, however, the cause he embraces is that of a Jewish exodus *from* Israel to the safety and high culture of Western civilization. "Diasporism," he tells Roth,

> plans to rebuild *everything*, not in an alien and menacing Middle East, but in those very lands where everything once flourished, while, at the same time, it seeks to avert the catastrophe of a second Holocaust brought about by the exhaustion of Zionism as a political and ideological force.

In the final analysis, though, the difference between the two ideologies, Henry's militant Zionism and the double's anti-Zionist Diasporism, is of little importance. Both represent the same thing, namely, the narrator's caricatured but deep craving to find meaning and sustenance in his Jewishness. This is a theme that has surfaced strongly in other recent books of Roth's as well, such as *Patrimony* (1991), a factual account of the illness and death of the author's father, and *Deception* (1990), a series of dialogues set in London between an American-Jewish writer named Philip and the charming Englishwoman whom he has taken as his adulterous lover and driven to distraction with his harping on his Jewish identity—and of all the developments not foreseen by Irving Howe, who took Roth harshly to task for his cavalier hostility to Jewish life, it is perhaps the most striking.

WHAT has Jewishness come to mean to Roth, a man who celebrated his sixtieth birthday last year and who, as the young author of *Goodbye, Columbus* and *Portnoy's Complaint*, seemed to be traveling away from the Jewish world at an escape velocity that soon promised to boost him out of it completely?

If one poses the question in terms of a quest for Jewish knowledge, or a serious engagement with Jewish history, the apparent answer is: no more than it ever did. And yet a sheer, almost abstract passion for being Jewish seems to grow stronger in Roth's work all the time. He has come to conceive of himself, one might say, as a pure, attributeless Jew-*an-sich*, "a Jew," as Nathan Zuckerman describes himself at the end of *The Counterlife*, "without Jews, without Judaism, without Zionism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple."

Perhaps what being Jewish does mean to Roth is something akin to being true to himself, which is quite different from the project that Zuckerman in *The Counterlife* despairingly calls "being oneself," and that the pop-pyschology books nowadays refer to as "writing one's own life script," a notion they might have found suggested in Roth's earlier work. For to think that our lives are coherently scriptable—Roth's latest fiction seems to be saying—is to nourish the illusion of an authorial autarky that we do not and cannot have and that can only lead to the proliferation of ever-more-false selves rather than the real one that it is our ambition to create. What *is* real is to acknowledge our authorial debts, which can be paid only in the form of loyalty to those—our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, *people*—to whom, exasperatedly perhaps but ultimately with a sense of gratitude that at least this much about us is not counterfeit, they are owed.

"Circumcision," writes Zuckerman in the same passage in which he is trying to convince his estranged Gentile wife to submit the child she is pregnant with to the ancient rite,

> gives the lie to the womb-dream of life in the beautiful state of innocent prehistory, the appealing idyll of living "naturally," unencumbered by man-made ritual. To be born is to lose all that. The heavy hand of human values falls on you right at the start, marking your genitals as its own. . . . Circumcision confirms that there is an us, and an us that isn't solely me and him.

There is a dogged integrity in this body of work that has taken so many books to get from "me" to "us." And that, certainly, is good for the Jews.

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A Dissent on "Schindler's List"

Philip Gourevitch

MOVIEGOERS are by now accustomed to the brief warnings attached to ratings in newspaper reviews: "nudity," "violence," "language," or that titillating euphemism, "adult situations." Each of these tags might fairly be applied to Steven Spielberg's latest megaproduction, *Schindler's List*, which is based on a true story of one Nazi's humanitarian response to the annihilation of Polish Jewry during World War II.

Now-familiar images—naked Jews being herded to their deaths by cursing SS men, heaps of corpses, mass graves—are punctuated by shots of summary, often arbitrary, executions of individual Jews at close range by pistol fire. By my count, Jewish heads explode in *Schindler's List* at an average rate of one every twelve minutes. Moments after the first of these nightmare images, and at intervals following other particularly ghastly episodes, Spielberg supplies emotional relief and contrast by cutting to shots of bare-breasted Aryan women dallying with their Nazi paramours. To contain the whole spectacle in a handy family advisory, *USA Today* coined a new phrase to follow the movie's R rating: "Holocaust horrors."

The shorthand is repellently apt—and yet *Schindler's List* also happens to be the most affirmative movie ever made about the *Shoah*. Newspaper advertisements, which depict the massive hand of a bare-armed man reaching down to clasp the small hand of a child, leave no doubt that the film is meant to deliver an uplifting message.

That the hand of salvation belongs to a member of the Nazi party and the hand of the child belongs to a Jew condemned to death is precisely the sort of contrary-to-expectations drama with which Hollywood loves to reward its audiences. And Oskar Schindler—a Sudeten German entrepreneur in Nazi-occupied Cracow who used all his considerable financial and human resources to save from extermination the more than 1,100 Jews he employed as slave laborers—is the perfect matinee hero: he is an inscrutable individualist outlaw; he outfoxes the Nazis at their own game; he ensures that all the Jews whom the audience gets to know survive; and he challenges our received notions of history by showing that even during the Holocaust some of the bad guys were actually good guys.

It is not surprising, then, that *Schindler's List* has been almost universally acclaimed by critics in the mainstream press. The collected reviews represent a kind of cultural grade inflation. "Rising brilliantly to the challenge of the material and displaying an electrifying creative intelligence, Mr. Spielberg has made sure that neither he nor the Holocaust will ever be thought of in the same way again," crowed Janet Maslin in the *New York Times*. The *New Yorker*'s Terrence Rafferty launched his ecstatic write-up by proclaiming that *Schindler's List* is "a great movie, and, like all great works, it feels both impossible and inevitable." The cover of *Newsweek* crowned it "movie of the year," as did the New York Film Critics' Circle and the Los Angeles Film Critics' Association. David Denby, in *New York* magazine, reached, Spielberg-like, for the extraterrestrial: "It's as if [Spielberg] understood for the first time why God gave him such extraordinary skills." To top all this off, President Clinton "implored" the American public to see it.

Schindler's List is certainly an impressive cinematic achievement, confirming—in case anyone doubted it—Spielberg's technical mastery of his medium. Except for a few regrettable minutes of color footage at the beginning and the end, the movie's three-plus hours are filmed in exquisite black and white. The lush inky pallet serves the director's desired newsreel/documentary look perfectly, making the historical material appear more familiar by coloring it according to its period. The film's tone might best be described as one of intimate distance, staying very close to the action but never claiming to know more than meets the eye.

That said, however, Spielberg's supremacy as a visual stylist is deeply undercut by his conventionality as a storyteller. Although Oskar Schindler's career was nothing if not extraordinary, Spielberg's direction serves it up in broad, safe strokes, by turns simplifying or exaggerating each scene to give it the maximum emotional wallop. He is a master of tightly choreographed scenes of mass chaos, but his affection for action-driven visual narration and relatively spare dialogue comes at the expense of compelling characterization; whenever people do talk for long, their speeches tend to be generic and melodramatic.

As a result, from a cast of thousands, few characters emerge with any individuality. Even the principals are ultimately little more than ciphers, collections of attributes unilluminated from within. Spielberg has said that he deliberately eschewed interpretation in favor of reporting, but in the case of Schindler, whose point of view governs the film, the director's refusal to provide even a suggestion of a coherent motive for bucking the Nazi tide is particularly egregious.

Oskar Schindler (played by Liam Neeson) is introduced to us in a Gatsbyesque sequence at a smoky, boozy nightclub in Cracow, where he is already winning over the local Nazi brass. In short or-

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der we recognize that Schindler, who has come to town with a big enamel swastika bullseye pinned to his lapel, is the ultimate German good-ol'-boy, a smooth-talking, smooth-dressing, high-living ladies' man with a limitless capacity for alcohol and an *idée fixe*: to become fabulously rich on the spoils of war, by any means possible.

Soon Schindler meets Itzhak Stern (Ben Kinglsey), holed up in a back office at the Nazi-appointed local Jewish council, and proposes that Stern help him find investors to acquire a metalwork factory that has been confiscated from its Jewish owners. Stern agrees, a deal is struck, and the factory is gotten ready to crank out pots and pans for the German army. Schindler decides to hire Jews as his employees, for the simple reason that they cost less than Poles. For their part, even though their wages go directly to the SS and they never see a penny for their labor, Stern and the others quickly recognize that their status as workers "essential to the war effort" may help to protect them.

Everybody has a price in Schindler's netherworld, and he is careful to ensure his enterprise by regularly dispensing handsome bribes and gifts to all the appropriate Nazi officials. When his workers are commandeered to shovel snow, and one of them is shot, Schindler protests to the SS that he is losing production time, and, besides, he expects to be compensated for the loss of "his" worker.

From start to finish, in other words, Spielberg's Schindler is simply another Nazi who regards the killing of Jewish slaves as a senseless business practice. Although he is seen to be constantly enlarging the roster of his Jewish employees, often taking in people who seem less than able-bodied laborers, we never know why. When anyone thanks him for providing a haven, or calls him "good," he dismisses the acknowledgment in apparent anger. He *could* be bluffing, aware that once his cover is blown it can never be reestablished, but Spielberg offers no clues.

In due course, the Cracow ghetto is liquidated. Schindler, apparently upset, watches from a ridge above the action, but when the hellish quarter-hour scene is over, we see him standing alone in his office, staring down at the deserted factory floor; the impression is that, for him, the unbearable brutality he has just witnessed amounts simply to a reversal of his financial fortunes. Of course, he bounces back. Following the Jews out to the newly opened Plaszow concentration camp, he plies the hyper-sadistic commandant, Amon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes), with liquor and bribes, winning permission to rent "his" Jews back and continue factory production.

As THE Jews' predicament steadily worsens, Schindler's acts of protection increase, and self-interest becomes an increasingly inadequate explanation of his motive. But the movie suggests no alternative. Schindler's decency is presented as a kind of enigmatic equivalent of Goeth's barbarity. The one protects Jews, the other likes to start his day by sniping at them from the porch of his villa. Both forms of behavior are unfathomable mysteries.

Finally, when Plaszow is about to be liquidated and the Jews sent to Auschwitz, Schindler composes his famous list, arranging to purchase "his" Jews from Goeth with suitcases of money, and to have them transported to a new factory-camp in his hometown of Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia. By now, though, it is obvious that Schindler's passion for saving Jews and for sabotaging efforts to exterminate them completely outweighs his passion for money. When a train of women bound from Plaszow to Brinnlitz is accidentally rerouted to Auschwitz, he rushes to the death camp and hands out diamonds until all of them are returned. At Brinnlitz, he operates a munitions factory for nearly a year, and sees to it personally that everything he produces is defective, that not a single shell he manufactures can be used. By the war's end, he is close to bankrupt.

On V.E. day, Schindler convenes all the *Schindlerjuden*, as they have come to be known, and delivers a speech, refusing any thanks and declaring: "I'm a member of the Nazi party. I'm a munitions manufacturer. I'm a profiteer of slave labor. I'm a criminal. After midnight I'll be hunted." Later, fleeing the Brinnlitz camp, he breaks down in a maudlin speech, lamenting that he did not do more to save Jews. But to the last frame, we are denied any indication of why Schindler acted as he did.

AFTER seeing the movie of *Schindler's List*, I read the clunky but compelling novel by Thomas Keneally on which it is based. There, unlike in Spielberg's version, the transformation of Schindler from a gung-ho Nazi war profiteer to a rescuer is presented with subtle complexity. True, Keneally does not claim to understand his hero, but he does offer convincing evidence that although Schindler wore his Nazi-party membership on his lapel to the bitter end, the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto turned him into a convinced anti-Nazi. For Keneally's Schindler, who is presumably the real Schindler, the *Aktion* in the ghetto triggers a premonition that the Nazi objective is not just the enslavement of Jewry, but the annihilation of the entire people. "Beyond this day," Keneally quotes Schindler as saying, "no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system."

Unlike in the movie, Keneally's Schindler does not hide his intentions from his Jewish associates, and he even welcomes contacts with underground couriers from Jewish relief organizations, traveling secretly to Budapest to brief Zionist agents on the escalation of the war against the Jews. When he hears the news of an attempt on Hitler's life, he sits drinking with a Jewish employee: "'If it was true,' said Oskar, 'then Germans, ordinary Germans like himself, could begin to redeem themselves. Purely because someone close to Hitler had had the guts to remove him from the earth.'"

Keneally's Schindler is motivated by disgust, which is to say a sense of common humanity. He comes to identify himself with the Jews he saves, not exactly as a fellow victim of the Nazis but as a

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fellow prisoner of an abominable system. He is hardly a man of "virtue" (as Keneally calls him), but he has become unambiguously righteous. When he leaves Brinnlitz he gives a speech, but in it he says nothing about being a Nazi, a slave-labor profiteer, or a criminal, nor does he break down in self-pity over having failed to do more.

Unlike Spielberg, finally, Keneally follows Schindler after the war. His career is marked by alcoholism and bankruptcy, as he lives in unhappy profligacy off the generosity of those he saved. When he is honored by Yad Vashem in the 1960's, reports of his wartime activities appear in German newspapers and he is cursed and attacked by Germans on the streets near his Frankfurt home. Punching out a man who calls him a "Jew-kisser," he is hauled into court and forced to pay a fine. "'I would kill myself,'" he writes to one of the surviving *Schindlerjuden*, "'if it wouldn't give them so much satisfaction.'"

This, in sum, is a very different Oskar Schindler from the tough, silent anti-superhero Steven Spielberg has served up. Spielberg's elisions strip Schindler of his human complexity and replace it with—nothing. By robbing us of Schindler's renunciation of Nazism, even in private, Spielberg gives us a simply enigmatic creation, the good Nazi. See, the director seems to be saying, heroism is ambiguous, goodness is ambiguous, right action, decency, fellow feeling—all ambiguous. And for this, for introducing the suggestion of moral ambiguity into the Holocaust, the very heart of the absolute, he has won the ecstatic plaudits of the critics.

BUT there is also something else at work in the critical excitement that has greeted *Schindler's List*. The celebration, which has had the air of a belated coming-of-age party, seems motivated at times less by what the movie says than by the fact that Steven Spielberg made it. The forty-six-year-old wizard has proved that he can move beyond *Jaws, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Indiana Jones, Jurassic Park, E.T.*, etc. to grapple at last with—well, yes—"adult situations." The *New Republic*'s Stanley Kauffmann sums up the mood: "This film is a welcome astonishment from a director who has given us much boyish *esprit*, much ingenuity, but little seriousness. . . . This may be the start of a new period of Spielberg's career—Part Two: The Man."

Spielberg himself has been pleased to join in the general happiness—and to add still another note to it. In numerous interviews pegged to the opening of *Schindler's List*, he has not only contemplated his newly-discovered gravity with childlike amazement but has tied it to the discovery of his own Jewishness. Thus, confiding to *Newsweek* that during the making of the movie he was "frightened every day," the director quickly added:

> I sound pretentious, like some kind of European artist or something. Because I've not had personal experiences in the making of my films. . . . Now I go to Poland and I get hit in the face with my personal life. My upbringing. My Jewishness. The stories my grandparents told me about the *Shoah*. And Jewish life came pouring back into my heart. I cried all the time.

Spielberg also confided to *Newsweek*, "I wanted to tell people who had told me to be ashamed of my Jewishness that I was so proud to be a Jew."

Reports of Spielberg's Jewish awakening have led to the notion that *Schindler's List* is somehow a "Jewish movie." It is not. Although it takes as its epigraph the (slightly mangled) words from the Talmud, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire," *Schindler's List* depicts the Nazi slaughter of Polish Jewry almost entirely through German eyes. Except for Itzhak Stern, played by Ben Kingsley (of *Gandhi* fame) in his trademark performance of phenomenally vain modesty, few Jewish figures are individuated from the mob of victims. When Jews *are* seen on their own, the camera eyes them with the detachment of a *National Geographic* ethnographic documentary.

Last year, the English-language *Warsaw Voice* described a casting call in Cracow, where most of the film was shot: Spielberg's team sought "about 800 people, especially families, who look stereotypically Semitic." He certainly found them; with their thick lips, big noses, dark curly hair and even darker eyes, those cast as Jews in this film hardly need yellow stars to be identified. And as for their behavior, J. Hoberman (whose negative review of *Schindler's List* in the *Village Voice* registered a rare dissent) captured it well: "Relegated to supporting parts in their own cataclysm, they hang around the Cracow ghetto . . . making Jewish jokes."

Some of Spielberg's Jewish caricatures, indeed, seem lifted less from the self-mockery of Catskill *tummlers* than from the pages of *Der Stuermer*. Straying once again from Keneally's book, the director makes a Catholic church the basecamp of Cracow's Jewish black marketeers; crouched over folded hands, they conduct business while Mass is being recited in Latin. When Stern brings a Jewish investor to meet with Schindler in his car, we see the money man as Schindler would see him, scrunched, simian-looking, grunting in Yiddish with a colleague and protesting, "Money's still money." And here are Jews as the SS invade their apartments. Are they consoling their children? No, they are making them eat jewels wadded in balls of bread. Are they praying? No, they are trying to pry the silver *mezuzah* from the door because they have been stopped from grabbing other valuables.

Perhaps the strangest thing about Spielberg's Jews is their accents. Everyone in the film sounds foreign—few members of the cast are native English-speakers, and none of the leading actors is American—but while the Aryans' accents are light, elegant, unidentifiable, the Jews sound fresh off the boat. This may have been a deliberate directorial decision, underscoring the film's German point of view by making the "inhuman" Jews sound as alien as possible. But whatever the reason, the effect is that these Cracow

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Jews seem more like foreigners—in their own hometown—than the invader from Vienna, Amon Goeth.

All this might not be so bad if Jews in the movie were at least allowed to say something perceptive about their plight. For the most part, however, they are viewed either as a silent, cowering mob or as a shrieking, scampering mob. Of course, during the Holocaust Jews were sometimes reduced to such extremes; but hardly all, and never always.

IN THE final moments of Tony Kushner's Pulitzer-Prize-winning play, *Angels in America*, a man suffering from AIDS watches an angel come crashing through the ceiling of his apartment, and gasps in campy esctasy: "How Steven Spielberg!" Now Steven Spielberg has made a movie about the Nazi war against the Jews, and the world gasps, "How Holocaust."

But is it? This film, writes Janet Maslin, "begins with the sight of Jewish prayer candles burning down to leave only wisps of smoke, and there can be no purer evocation of the Holocaust than that." Of Spielberg's depiction of the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto, Terrence Rafferty writes: "In this turbulent and almost unbearably vivid fifteen-minute sequence the Holocaust, 50 years removed from our contemporary consciousness, suddenly becomes overwhelming immediate, undeniable."

Such absurdities—does it really take Steven Spielberg to render the Holocaust "undeniable"?—echo Spielberg's own claim, unquestioned by reviewers, that the making of *Schindler's List* constitutes an act of documentary witness. "I recreated these events and then I experienced them as any witness or victim would have," Spielberg told *Newsweek*. "It wasn't like a movie." In *Time* he is reported as having instructed his cast, "We're not making a film, we're making a document."

This is perhaps the most pernicious notion that has become attached to *Schindler's List*—that it is somehow more than a movie, more than a simulation: that it is "the real thing." Yet to confuse any aesthetic representation with the object represented is either to participate, or to be lost, in a lie. In the case of the Holocaust, it would seem a matter of particular urgency not to confuse fact with fiction, reality with illusion.

The equation of artifice with historical artifact quickly leads to even broader distortions: Terrence Rafferty, for instance, suggests that Spielberg's accomplishment as a director is "nearly as miraculous" as Oskar Schindler's acts of salvation. This impulse to crown memorializers of the Holocaust as heroes themselves—as if those who look back upon the event were actually living through it—is an all-too-common mode of contemporary flattery.

Worse, it is plainly anti-historical. Hailing Spielberg's "visionary clarity," Rafferty quotes the critic James Agee on the Civil War scenes in D.W. Griffith's epic *The Birth of a Nation* (1915): "A perfect realization of a collective dream of what the Civil War was like, as veterans might remember it 50 years later, or as children, 50 years later, might imagine it." In fact, Agee's observation is better taken as a criticism of *Schindler's List* than as a salute to it. Veterans' memories and children's imaginations are notoriously unreliable sources of historical representation; they tend to be idealized and clichéd—in a word, cartoonish—which is precisely the quality Spielberg brings to the Holocaust.

SPIELBERG has not been alone recently in promoting the possibility of confusion on these matters. Indeed, historians of American mass culture may look back on 1993 as the year of the Holocaust. Even as polls have shown that Americans' awareness of the Nazi war against the Jews has become subject to widespread ignorance, skepticism, and outright denial, hundreds of thousands of visitors, most of them non-Jewish, have flocked to the new Holocaust museums that opened in Washington and Los Angeles last winter and spring, and many more wound up the year watching *Schindler's List*.

For all their differences, both the museums and the movie were conceived as efforts to preserve the memory of the Holocaust at a time when the generation which witnessed its events is on the brink of becoming a memory itself. This crucial moment of generational transition would seem to demand a heightened sense of responsibility to the past. Yet the mindless critical hyperbole which has greeted *Schindler's List* suggests that powerful spectacle continues to be more beguiling than human and historical authenticity—and the psychology of the Nazis a bigger draw than the civilization of the people they murdered. It is profoundly disheartening that Steven Spielberg's Holocaust may be the only example of "Jewish culture" seen by millions; and I imagine Oskar Schindler would roll over in his Jerusalem grave if he knew that his life had become an object lesson in the false and foolish notion that goodness is incomprehensible.

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Endangered Species

THE ARABISTS: THE ROMANCE OF AN AMERICAN ELITE. By ROBERT D. KAPLAN. *Free Press. 333 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by MARTIN KRAMER

TEN years ago, on January 18, 1984, two men entered the campus of the American University of Beirut, known by generations of graduates simply and affectionately as AUB. In College Hall, the stately administration building, they approached Malcolm Kerr, the university's president and one of America's leading students of contemporary Arab politics. Kerr had left his professorship at UCLA to guide AUB through the treacherous shoals of Lebanon's war. He returned to the Beirut campus literally as its son: he had been born in the university hospital 52 years earlier, to American parents who served on AUB's faculty.

Kerr was a quintessential Arabist, whose privileged knowledge of the Arabs derived from intimate familiarity and deep sympathy. "'Arab-Western relations' was *our* subject," he once wrote. But that morning, his own analysis of his subject proved fatally wrong: the two visitors shot him through the head, in the name of Islam.

In *The Arabists,* Robert D. Kaplan seeks to explain why such experts, despite the best of intentions and a close familiarity with the Arabs, showed a marked tendency to be fatally wrong. As serving diplomats, they sometimes imperiled not only themselves but the interests of the United States. They were wrong when they argued that the U.S. had to choose between some twenty Arab states and one Israel. They were wrong when they endorsed Arab nationalism as the sole will of the Arab peoples. And they were spectacularly wrong when they built Saddam Hussein into a man of reason, and then inadvertently flashed him a go over Kuwait.

With each miscalculation, more State Department Arabists were eased out of their slots, so that today they appear to be an endangered species. More decisive verdicts on their triumphs and failings will be passed by future historians, who will have full access to the diplomatic archives. But Kaplan has rendered a great service by talking to these men now, before age and infirmity claim them.

THE origins of America's Arabists can be traced back to the 19th century, an age of Protestant missionary fervor and competition. Presbyterians and Congregationalists sent missions to those Ottoman provinces which would later be divided into Syria and Lebanon. Their religious preaching received a tepid response, but the missionaries opened modern schools, and these attracted eager students of every faith. The queen of this American empire of education was the Syrian Protestant College, established in 1866 on "the finest site in all Beirut," a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean.

"They went out to proselytize," wrote the late Elie Kedourie of the American missionaries, "and have stayed to sympathize." That sympathy took the form of support for Arab national sentiment. In the early years, this encouragement was almost inadvertent, the by-product of missionary translations of the New Testament which helped to forge modern Arabic. But in later years, the missionaries deliberately preached the gospel of national self-determination, and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points proved to have a more potent appeal than the Bible.

In 1920, the Syrian Protestant College became the American University of Beirut. The change of name reflected the new mission of the school: the propagation of American values, through social service and nationalism. A year earlier, Howard Bliss, the college president, had gone to the Paris Peace Conference to plead the Arab case. Religion thus gave way to politics, and the American expatriates became one of Lebanon's most influential sects, allied especially to the Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians in a shared allegiance to Arab nationalism.

Kaplan dwells on the story of the missionaries and educators because their sons became some of America's first Arabist diplomats. They were born and raised in Lebanon, and spoke some Arabic as their birthright. Perhaps the most dashing was Marine Colonel William Eddy, born in Sidon to missionary parents. Eddy became a wartime OSS operative in Tangier and an ambassador to Saudi Arabia, serving as translator at the famous summit between Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud in 1945. The Foreign Service had no better way to secure competent Arabists, who were essential if the U.S. were to edge out rivals in the Arab world. Kaplan attests to the rare talents of men like Eddy, who proved indispensable in tasks requiring a sixth sense of local culture and firm grasp of a difficult language.

But the Arabists also brought the convictions of their fathers straight into the State Department. These included the belief that Arabs were becoming more like Americans with each graduating class of the mission schools and AUB. Good works, not conquest, had won for America an immense moral influence. The Arab world would become America's preserve the moment the U.S. government also endorsed the political cause of Arab independence and unity.

When the U.S. decided instead to support the creation of Israel in 1948, the Arabists felt abandoned. Eddy, for one, resigned, but others stayed on, nursing their resentment. In interview after interview, Kaplan's Arabists make it abundantly clear that they regarded American support for the creation of Israel as a tragic mistake, from which the region and

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America's stature have yet to recover.

Mistake or not, the Arabists aggravated its effects. Phillip J. Baram, in *The Department of State in the Middle East* (1978), has shown that before Israel's creation, the Arabists wrongly led the Arabs to conclude that the U.S. had no interest in Zionism's success. Baram suggests that this

> deception of the Arabs—as if, in the making of American foreign policy, presidential, congressional, and domestic opinion counted for naught—was as much a cause of the Arabs' evolving hostility to the U.S. as the substantive fact that after the war American Presidents did support the right of a Jewish state to exist.

It would not be the last time Arabists misled Arabs over the direction of American policy, proving themselves as dangerous to their Arab friends as to their own department.

As Kaplan demonstrates, the Arabists' peculiar talents could only be acquired at the price of prolonged isolation from a rapidly changing America—an isolation that a stint at Deerfield or Exeter, followed by Amherst or Princeton, did little to relieve. Ultimately that price became too steep, and after 1973, when Arab-Israeli "peace-processing" required a broader empathy for Arabs and Jews, most of the Arabists of the old school had to go. Much of Kaplan's story is about how they were put out to pasture under the Nixon and Ford administrations, to be replaced by hybrid diplomats who knew their way not only through the Damascus market but across Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv.

Some of these newcomers were professional peace-processors, others Kaplan describes as Arabists-lite. In any case, the formula worked, and the veteran Arabists were confounded. "Certainly," wrote Malcolm Kerr, "the United States has been far luckier than it deserved in managing to befriend Israel without sacrificing important interests in the Arab world." Luck indeed, for this immense triumph owed nothing to the old-school Arabists, and was achieved largely in spite of them.

KAPLAN has told his tale with great verve and felicity of style—talents the Arabists themselves never mustered. Of their British counterparts, it could at least be said that they wrote tirelessly, even feverishly, to give some account of their deeds to a wider public. T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the self-serving outpourings of Gertrude Bell and Ronald Storrs, Wilfred Thesiger and Freya Stark—these writings commanded a vast and influential readership. America's Arabists have left no comparable literary legacy.

"Read, travel, read, travel, that's the way to go," Kaplan is told by William Eagleton, a former envoy to Iraq and an ambassador to Syria (whom Francis Fukuyama, quoted in this book, remembers from his own days in the State Department as "the one who always fed us horseshit about how Saddam was a potential moderate"). Eagleton's words sum up the difference between the British and American traditions: the British Arabists would write, travel, write, travel—ever with an eye to the public and posterity. The American Arabists largely subsisted on this borrowed intellectual capital. If they have been misunderstood, it is partly because they disdained getting ink under their nails.

The Arabists, then, is likely to stand as their monument for some time to come. All told, they have little cause for complaint. Kaplan displays a genuine admiration for the patriotism, courage, and expertise of many of his interviewees, who emerge from his brief portraits in all their decency and complexity. He has plainly been charmed by them, enough to exonerate them of the charge of anti-Semitism, which was often leveled indiscriminately by their critics. "In the long list of historical adversaries of the Jews," writes Kaplan, "the Arabists could easily claim to be the least noxious. The best of enemies, in other words."

In one Arabist, Kaplan even finds a hero: Hume Horan, the remarkable diplomat who, as ambassador to Sudan, finessed Operation Moses, the 1984 airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Horan, whose Arabic reportedly bested that of any of his contemporaries, describes his fellow Arabists as "the Pekinese orchids begot by an American superpower." Kaplan in turn calls *him* "the orchid of orchids" and "the most advanced form of the Arabist species before it began going extinct." Kaplan's labored comparison between Horan and T. E. Lawrence falls flat. But Horan, in addition to having achieved something of great value, recites the most penetrating lines in *The Arabists* and leaves an appetite for more.

Then comes the antithesis: an Arabist who is held to embody all that went wrong in the tradition. In his hardest-hitting chapter, Kaplan zeroes in on April Glaspie, the last U.S. ambassador to Saddam Hussein and one of the last veteran Arabists. In her final audience with the Iraqi leader, she told him that the United States had "no opinion" on "your border disagreement with Kuwait." Iraq invaded Kuwait a week later.

The portrait of Glaspie is unsparing (she tried to be "twice as much of an old boy as the real old boys"); so too is the description of her performance in Baghdad as a "disgrace." Glaspie herself declined to be interviewed by Kaplan, and her defense has been left in this book to the veteran Arabists, who cast her as a victim of the Bush administration's indulgent Iraq policy. Kaplan is unconvinced, arguing that "she was a driver and a hard-core believer in this policy down to the very end."

This is a debate that will rage for years, even after historians have the documentary evidence. But Kaplan has made a compelling *prima-facie* case against Glaspie, one which includes ample testimony from other diplomats that, whatever the precise genesis of American policy, this variety of Arabist, with her known weakness for Arab radicals, was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The episode leads inexorably to the conclusion that there are not many right places left in the Arab world, even for the most able survivors of the old guard.

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HAD Kaplan taken his research a step further, he would have noted the subtle exchange that has occurred between diplomacy and academe. The Arabists had to go because they could not adapt to the American role of making peace between Arabs and Israelis. But their decline in the Department of State has been accompanied by their ascendancy in departments of Arab, Islamic, and Middle Eastern studies. When Malcolm Kerr was turned away from the Foreign Service for health reasons, he went into the university. Now his second choice has become the first choice of a new generation.

In that light, Kaplan might have dissected the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., which has done more than any other institution to facilitate the transition from Arabist expertise to semi-scholarly authority. More recently, scholars who fled AUB during Lebanon's war have helped to transform major centers and academic departments in this country into the last outposts of Arab nationalism. Some campuses, afflicted by an endemic third-worldism or tempted by oil money, have provided hothouse conditions for the survival and spread of the views Kaplan examines. In these redoubts of tenured Arabism, the intellectual campaign against an Arab-Israeli settlement is already being waged. *The Arabists* is therefore unfinished: there is a crying need for a final chapter, perhaps entitled "The Retreat to the Academy."

And while no young diplomat would call himself an Arabist, the Department of State is not completely in the clear, either. On the sidelines of the peace process, the last keepers of the Arabist flame pose as authoritative interpreters of Islamic fundamentalism. As they see it, radical Islam is the harbinger of a Protestant-like reformation, from which all Islam will emerge more democratic and more egalitarian. The radicals should not be fought, they argue, but gently guided to the light.

This is, of course, a political reworking of the unanswered prayer of the Arabists' missionary forebears for the conversion of the Muslims. Malcolm Kerr, whose wife eulogized him at his death as "a nonreligious missionary," was gunned down by just this kind of Islam. It remains to be seen whether such political evangelists can now persuade America to turn the other cheek yet one more time.

Neocon-bashing

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS: ESSAYS ON THE FAILURE OF AMERICAN CONSERVATISM. By SAMUEL FRANCIS. *University of Missouri Press. 256 pp. $37.50.*

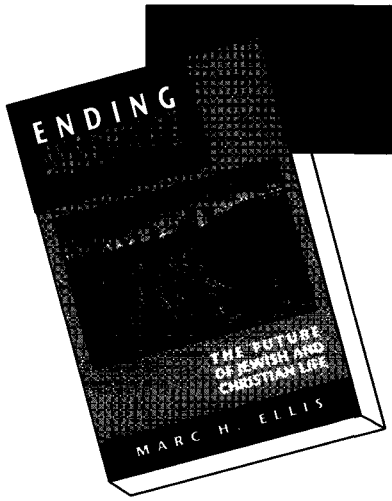
Reviewed by DAN HIMMELFARB

TAXONOMISTS of American conservatism typically divide their subject into four categories—Old Right, New Right, neoconservatives, and libertarians—and the tension among these groups has been a recurring theme in discussions of the American Right.

DAN HIMMELFARB *contributed "Conservative Splits" to our May 1988 issue.*

In the 50's, 60's, and 70's, one could hardly open an issue of *National Review* without encountering an article or review that dealt in some way with the conflict between libertarianism and the Old Right (the latter usually referred to as "traditionalist" conservatism). The libertarian-traditionalist conflict has not disappeared, of course, but relatively little is written about it today; in the 80's and 90's, the neoconservatives have replaced the libertarians as the principal internecine foes of the Old Right. With the new nemesis, moreover, there has come new terminology: if a conservative who is not a libertarian is a "traditionalist," a conservative who is not a neoconservative must be a "paleoconservative"—which is what an Old Rightist is often called today.

Samuel Francis's *Beautiful Losers* is the latest offensive in the neo/paleo war. As it happens (and just to complicate matters), Francis himself apparently prefers the populist New Right to the high-



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brow Old Right. (His book contains an occasional reference to the Old Right's "pretentious medievalism" or "philosophical esoterica.") But if Francis is not a card-carrying paleoconservative, he is certainly a fellow traveler. He is a contributing editor of *Chronicles*, which is roughly to paleoconservatism what COMMENTARY is to neoconservatism (*National Review* having long since fallen into disfavor with paleoconservatives because of its neoconservative tendencies), and the essays collected in *Beautiful Losers* bear the unmistakable imprint of the Old Right.

Thus, one of the themes of this book is an ambivalence (to put it mildly) toward modernity in general and liberal democracy in particular, together with the view that the American Founding was not fundamentally the work of liberal democrats. Acknowledging that "bourgeois society" is characterized by "a capitalist economy, a democratic-republican political order, and a liberal ethos that tolerates and legitimizes a high degree of private differentiation," Francis believes that "the importance of bourgeois ideology in the revolution, the country's founding, and the American experience" has been exaggerated by those who ignore "the Old World roots of the American order" and thereby create a "selective and distorted picture of our national identity." As a general matter, Francis is suspicious of democracy, and is even more suspicious of "global democracy." Those who seek to "spread" democracy Francis dubs "democratists"—a term that is a venerable paleoconservative epithet.

Francis is also unwilling to defend equality in any of its forms, and he refuses to distinguish good egalitarianism from bad. Thus, in the fashion of virtually every Old Right intellectual, Francis dismisses both the Declaration of Independence and its greatest interpreter, Abraham Lincoln. The Declaration, according to Francis, was merely a "proclamation of national independence"; it says nothing about the "purpose" of any government. As for Lincoln, his "orthodoxy of fundamental moral absolutes" was "dubious," and his "doctrine of acquisitive egalitarianism" was "not that of the Framers or the early Republic."

But these remarks seem positively temperate when compared with Francis's discussion of another famous egalitarian (and defender of the Declaration's self-evident truths), Martin Luther King, Jr. Because the United States government has made King an "official hero," writes Francis, the American people no longer have "any legitimate grounds to resist the logic and dynamic" of "anti-American and anti-Western" forces and the "radical reconstruction of American society that is implicit in them." Indeed, Americans who admire King have "forfeited the right to revere the Constitution, the governmental principles and mechanisms it established, and the men who wrote it."

Related to the paleoconservative discomfort with liberal democracy is the belief that the difference between Western liberalism and Communist totalitarianism is a difference of degree and not of kind. This idea, as well, can be found in *Beautiful Losers*. Liberalism, according to Francis, is "a close cousin to Communism," and the Marxist "premises" of liberalism provide "the justification for the expansion of state and bureaucracy, the regulation of the economy, the redistribution of wealth, and the imposition of . . . egalitarian experiments on traditional institutions and communities."

Like many paleoconservatives, moreover, Francis defends a certain version of isolationism, which is based, essentially, on the belief that an activist foreign policy is yet another manifestation of 20th-century statism. According to this view, interventionism is to foreign policy what the welfare state is to domestic policy. Francis also devotes two full essays to the characteristically paleoconservative argument that the President wields too much, and Congress not enough, power in foreign affairs. (The prevailing conservative view, of course, is precisely the opposite.)

THE most prominent paleoconservative theme in *Beautiful Losers*, however, is animosity toward neoconservatism. Indeed, the subtitle of the book is "Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism," and its thesis is that this "failure" is due to the fact that neoconservatism is now "the dominant faction on the American Right." Six of the nineteen essays in *Beautiful Losers* are devoted, in part or in whole, to neoconservatism, and though they vary in tone, not a single one of them has anything complimentary to say. In addition, Francis takes what can only be described as gratuitous swipes at neoconservatives in essays that deal with otherwise unrelated subjects.

The substance of the attacks is familiar. To begin with, neoconservatives are modernists, operating, according to Francis, within a "conventionally modernist framework." More specifically, they are left-wing modernists, with "little interest in dismantling or radically restructuring the welfare state."

But it is not only in their defense of the welfare state that neoconservatives replicate "liberal-Left premises." If their domestic policy is Rooseveltian, their foreign policy is Wilsonian. While there may be

> formal acceptance of the "national interest" as the proper measuring rod of American foreign policy . . . , in practice the neoconservative interpretation of national interest reduces to the integration of the United States into a global and cosmopolitan world order.

Nor can neoconservatives easily be distinguished from Left-liberals when it comes to manners and morals. Although they may "formally" recognize the importance of "religion, family, morality, community, and patriotism in creating and preserving a free society," in practice neoconservatives neglect "moral, social, and spiritual concerns," concentrating instead on "purely material and 'pragmatic' issues."

AN OBVIOUS response to this portrayal of neoconservatism as a species of Left-liberalism is that on the issues that matter most, neoconservatism differs fundamentally from Left-liberalism—while, iron-

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ically, the paleoconservatism defended by Francis does not.

Francis essentially divides the political universe into two camps: those who oppose the very idea of a welfare state—or what Francis, following James Burnham, calls the "managerial regime"—and those who do not. The latter group is in turn divided into those who approve of the concept of a welfare state but disapprove of its size and scope, on the one hand, and those who approve of the welfare state both in theory and in practice, on the other. The opponents of the welfare state are the paleoconservatives; the welfare-state "moderates" are the neoconservatives; and the welfare-state "radicals" are the Left-liberals. According to this view, it is the paleoconservatives on one side and the neoconservative "moderates" and Left-liberal "radicals" on the other.

This view presupposes, however, that "managerialism" is the central political issue of the 20th century; that the New Deal was nearly as revolutionary as the Russian Revolution; and that any country with a "mixed economy"—no matter how liberal-democratic its political order—is in some fundamental sense a "close cousin" of the most totalitarian Communist regime.

If one takes a different view—if one believes that the most urgent political problem of the 20th century is not resisting the growth of bureaucracy but ensuring the survival of a free society—then one must conclude that it is not the neoconservatives but the paleoconservatives who share many of the "premises" of the Left. For while neoconservatives do believe in the necessity (and even the desirability) of some type of welfare state, paleoconservatives share something considerably more important with the Left: an attitude toward liberal democracy (and its underlying principles) that ranges from mild discomfort to outright hostility.

WHEN the most fundamental questions about liberal democracy have been debated, paleoconservatives and leftists have invariably ended up on the same—and the wrong—side. Thus, whereas neoconservatives have perennially been for intervention against foreign enemies, paleoconservatives and leftists have routinely argued for isolation. Whereas neoconservatives have from the very beginning been for colorblindness in education and employment, paleoconservatives and leftists have (from different motives and sympathies) defended race consciousness. And whereas neoconservatives have always been for academic freedom in particular and free speech in general, paleoconservatives and leftists have supported one or another academic orthodoxy and the suppression of dissent. In this sense, the far-Left *Nation* has more in common with *Chronicles* than with COMMENTARY, and Jesse Jackson (the admirer of Castro) has more in common with Patrick Buchanan (the admirer of Franco) than with Jeane Kirkpatrick (the admirer of Truman).

So it is only to be expected that the Old Right also shares with the Left an antipathy toward neoconservatives. Indeed, *Beautiful Losers* repeats many of the charges that have appeared in the two leading left-wing accounts of neoconservatism: Peter Steinfels's *The Neoconservatives* (1979) and Sidney Blumenthal's *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment* (1986). One finds in Francis's essays, for example, the suggestion that neoconservatism is influential not so much because its ideas are persuasive as because it is well-funded. (Paleoconservatives have the "brains," says Francis, but neoconservatives have the "money.") Also borrowed from the Left is the related (and even more crass) idea that neoconservatives hold the views that they do, not because they consider those views to be correct but because they will enable them to attain political power.

But it is not simply a matter of mimicking the neoconservatives' left-wing critics; Francis explicitly relies on them in his essays, citing both Steinfels and Blumenthal with approval. In this connection, it is worth noting that Russell Kirk, a revered paleoconservative elder, has provided a blurb for the most recent left-wing attack on neoconservatism, Gary Dorrien's *The Neoconservative Mind* (1993). Kirk's words of praise—he calls the obviously partial book "impartial"—appear directly above a blurb written by one Joseph Schwartz, who is identified as a member of the National Political Committee of Democratic Socialists of America. (Democratic Socialists of America, whose members regularly write for *Dissent*, should not be confused with Social Democrats USA, whose members occasionally write for COMMENTARY.)

That Russell Kirk should have kind words for *The Neoconservative Mind*, however, is not especially surprising, given the animus toward neoconservatism that is common to paleoconservatives and leftists. If anything is surprising, it is that Samuel Francis's publisher was unable to persuade a prominent left-wing critic of neoconservatism—like Sidney Blumenthal—to provide a blurb for the dust jacket of *Beautiful Losers.*

Beyond Housing

A NATION IN DENIAL: THE TRUTH ABOUT HOMELESSNESS. By ALICE S. BAUM and DONALD W. BURNES. *Westview. 247 pp. $52.50; $16.95 (paper).*

Reviewed by SUSAN WIVIOTT

IN JANUARY 1993, Doll Johnson, an eighty-year-old resident of the South Bronx, was bludgeoned to death by Christopher Battiste, a thirty-three-year-old homeless man staying at a nearby shelter. Predictably, it turned out that Battiste was a mentally-ill drug abuser who had been in and out of psychiatric emergency rooms and prisons but had never received any long-term care for his afflictions.

This event, and similarly tragic ones that have occurred in New York City and elsewhere over the last decade, are extreme manifestations of what those who live near shelters and other residences for the homeless have known and have been saying for years: that many

SUSAN WIVIOTT *was until recently senior policy adviser to the New York City Council President.*

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are mentally ill, or substance abusers, or both, and that shelters serve as focal points for crime, violence, drug use, and other offensive and ultimately dangerous behavior.

To put it another way, the homeless suffer from problems that housing alone will not solve. So who are they, really? And what *can* be done to help them? These are the kinds of questions that are grappled with in *A Nation in Denial.* Alice Baum and Donald Burnes, both of whom have had first-hand experience in Washington, D.C., have written a book which, though at times repetitive, dispels many contemporary myths surrounding homelessness, and especially the central one: that the homeless are simply regular people without homes.

Rather the contrary is true, as Baum and Burnes demonstrate. In fact, according to sources cited by the authors, "between 65 and 85 percent of the homeless population suffer from serious chronic alcoholism, addiction to drugs, severe chronic psychiatric disorders, or some combination of the three." They are also likely to have been in prison or, as children, in foster care, and to be chronically unemployed. Most characteristically, they lack any connection to family or other community institutions. Their problems are more severe, and they are more dysfunctional, than even the poorest people who have homes. Because of this, the authors contend, most of the homeless need something other than or more than just a roof. They require long-term intensive treatment.

Anyone who doubts this assessment should visit a homeless shelter. All too often, shelters provide residents with little or no help for their real problems. Drug dealing and drug use are rampant and open, and so too is the criminal behavior associated with drugs—prostitution, theft, assault, and occasionally murder. When the homeless move to permanent housing, they usually take these habits with them.

In New York City, for example, a number of programs that provide permanent housing to homeless families had to be scaled back or eliminated because the results were so disheartening. One program, which rehabilitated vacant buildings and then filled them with homeless families previously living in shelters or hotels, was abandoned within a couple of years because the buildings, now occupied by young female-headed households, were quickly overwhelmed by drugs, vandalism, and crime.

Baum and Burnes also refute a number of the ancillary myths that have served in recent years to obscure the true pathology of the homeless. For instance, while it is true that there are more homeless today than 30 years ago, the reason is not primarily economic (as advocates of the homeless would have it) but largely demographic. The authors calculate that, because of the baby boom, there are up to 500,000 more schizophrenics today than there were 20 years ago—yet in the last 40 years state beds for the mentally ill have been cut by 80 percent, from a high of about 552,000 in 1955 to about 100,000 today. Many of the severely ill, who in the past would have been sent to in-patient facilities, have no place to go. (Community residences meant to replace large institutions do exist, but only in very small numbers.)

WHILE Baum and Burnes do an excellent job of defining and characterizing the homeless, their book is weaker when it comes to solutions. Thus, they call for programs to evaluate and address the diverse needs of the homeless population; but ideas for new programs have never been in short supply, and in fact there are successful programs, albeit on a very small scale, at work in many cities. The problem lies elsewhere.

Throughout their book, Baum and Burnes argue that, out of compassion and a desire not to "blame the victim," we as a nation have been inhibited from identifying or acknowledging the problems of the homeless for what they really are. This may once have been true; but most people today, like those living near the shelter that housed Christopher Battiste, are well aware of the severity of the problems facing the homeless. While at one time they may have been ready to help out, they have by now lost faith in the ability or the willingness of government either to do much for the homeless or to protect those in their vicinity.

The failure of social-service agencies and government to respond to legitimate concerns and fears of communities has created an atmosphere of anger and distrust that has hardened into active resistance. Communities that once welcomed, or at least did not oppose, homeless shelters have grown disillusioned as the advocates who fought for these shelters and the governments that have funded them refuse to take any responsibility for the crime, drugs, and filth they bring into neighboring streets.

This is where we stand now. Those who created and have perpetuated the myth of the homeless as regular folks are, finally, beginning to acknowledge that the old way of dealing with them—simply providing them with a roof—has been a catastrophic failure. And there does seem to be an emerging consensus that we need, as Baum and Burnes argue, to treat underlying problems. Finally, as noted above, good models already exist for how to begin going about the task. The real trick will be to convince a properly jaded and properly disgusted citizenry that the new programs will really be different from the old, and that the investment will pay off.

The Higher Gamesmanship

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FREE SPEECH: AND IT'S A GOOD THING TOO. By STANLEY FISH. *Oxford. 332 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by DANIEL J. SILVER

STANLEY FISH, a professor at Duke University, is a famous Milton scholar who has also written a great deal on the theory of literary criticism and the philoso-

DANIEL J. SILVER, *a new contributor, is an attorney in Washington, D.C. who has taught English at Yale and at the University of Washington.*

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phy of law. His recent and more general notoriety, however, rests on his participation in a series of public debates with Dinesh D'Souza, the author of *Illiberal Education*,* on the status of "political correctness" on our campuses. Fish's latest collection of essays, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech*, contains several essays written for those occasions, as well as articles on legal theory, pragmatist philosophy, and current trends in literary studies.

Fish observes here that it was an odd move of "central casting" to have him posed against D'Souza as a defender of the leftist agenda and a partisan of the effort to redefine the academic curriculum in order to accommodate the goals of "multiculturalism" and "diversity." He is, after all, the wrong person to lend moral support to a movement that aims to undermine his own decades-long scholarly commitment to 17th-century poets, surely the most moribund of the dead white males who make up the received literary "canon" under attack by the multiculturalists. Moreover, unlike those guilt-ridden academics who try to atone for their assumed complicity in the oppression of minorities, women, and gays by adding a sop or two to the reading list, Fish says he will shamelessly go on reading and teaching Milton and his ilk as if nothing had happened.

So what *does* animate Fish's support for the anti-patriarchal, antirationalist, anti-Western liberationists? Fish claims that his defense stems not from any advocacy of the diversity agenda as such but from his disgust at its critics. He trots out the usual suspects, such as Lynne Cheney (the former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities) and William J. Bennett (the former Secretary of Education). These he characterizes as right-wing ideologues, whose commitment to "universal" human values is only a cover for a particularist agenda—the well-financed special pleading for a specific class, simply acting out of its own partisan sense of the world.

But it soon becomes clear that, for Fish, the debate over the curriculum is just a special instance of a larger crisis—a crisis of liberalism—which he here undertakes to cure. If there is any connecting thematic thread in this collection, it is Fish's unrelenting attack on certain ideals of classical liberalism: individuality, autonomy, respect for the neutrality of legal institutions, objectivity, and the like. Fish sees these ideals as self-serving obfuscations, posited by those who refuse to face the essentially political nature of all assertions of value.

In the world according to Fish, all of us live with blinders on. We cannot see beyond our narrow perspectives, a tragicomic limitation brought into relief precisely when we try to appeal to a transcendental viewpoint. We are, moreover, deeply and inescapably constrained by the institutions—"interpretive communities," in Fish's jargon—in which we live and work. These institutional constraints dictate the terms of our thought and speech. When, for instance, we make claims about how life should be lived, we are merely reflecting a viewpoint which comes out of some groping sense of where we are amid the local conditions that shape us. Our aspirations reflect only that piece of the horizon that is visible from our bailiwick.

This idea of perspectivism, as it is often called, is flatly asserted by Fish as a demonstrable philosophical fact. From within its framework, it is not a giant leap to the notion that, as there is no such thing as neutrality, and no disinterested appeal to objectivity—objectivity now being construed as the name we give to an irredeemably partisan view to which we try to attach universal appeal by fiat—there is also no such thing as free speech. Our speech is "always already" enslaved to convention and institutional positioning.

In Fish's view, it is a sign of neurosis that liberals—and for these purposes he might just as well have included many conservatives and neoconservatives as well—will not face up to the partisan and political nature of everything they say. Would it not be better, he asks, for us to abandon neutrality as an *a-priori* categorical principle and just stipulate that some speech is better than others? True, he concedes, we would then revert to naked conflict over which speech to ban and which to protect. But how bracing and honest that kind of reckoning would be, in contrast to the pretense of neutrality we now insist on maintaining even as we sneak in all kinds of de-facto censorship.

Fish likes to position his views as if they were the culmination of an American tradition of pragmatism, taking their place in the line of William James, John Dewey, and, more recently, Richard Rorty. But there is little of the meliorist and essentially optimistic spirit of American pragmatism in Fish's work. What he shares with pragmatism is a deep suspicion of metaphysical abstractions, and a belief that we can do real work in this world by attending to local particulars of social practice rather than relying on theoretical justifications or foundations. The odd dividing line—so definitive as to make one wonder why Fish bothers to invoke pragmatism at all—is that traditional pragmatists regard the challenge of dealing with quotidian particulars as liberating, while for Fish contingency is merely fate.

Fish emphasizes that we are bound by the operative terms of our "interpretive communities" and cannot escape them. And as a corollary, he therefore insists, as if it were a doctrinal mantra, that there is no sense in criticizing the intrinsic terminology and concerns of a profession from the outside. Although he abjures the liberal "fetish" of promoting the autonomy of the individual, he endorses the autonomy of professions, which are special cases of his "interpretive communities."

This is where Fish does find his liberation—in transforming the recognition of constraint into a sense of contentment at being deeply situated in one's professional activity; the value to be drawn from the irreducible particularity of our worldly existence is that of just "playing the game"—

* Reviewed by Joseph Adelson in the June 1991 Commentary.

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not a sense of wider or higher purpose, or any commitment to the *content* of the exercise, but simply the peace that comes with understanding that one is, willy-nilly, part of the game.

This notion of happy gamesmanship may seem like a strangely empty conclusion, but at least (to return to where we began) it has the merit of helping to explain how Fish comes to defend curriculum reform—i.e., changes in his own professional setting—while remaining skeptical of the agenda of the multiculturalists. To be sure, in doing so Fish betrays something of the *faux*-centrism, the phony balancing of Left and Right, that Carol Iannone has dissected in "PC with a Human Face" (COMMENTARY, August 1993): campus radicals come off in Fish's rather limp critique as naive flower children, while their critics are stigmatized as repressive interventionists. It is an offensive and clearly biased picture—and yet there is reason to believe that Fish is sincere in disavowing the *ideas* of the leftists, if not their attacks on tradition.

WHAT underlies Fish's indulgence of the radical agenda is something actually more disturbing than fellow-traveling sentimentality. Attacking defenders of the traditional canon, he invokes the terms of pragmatism and asks: "[W]hat is to be gained or lost in our everyday lives as students and teachers by either welcoming or rejecting various new emphases and methodologies urged on us by various constituencies?" And he answers as follows:

> If we harken to those who speak in the name of diversity (and I say again that I myself resist the invocation of diversity as a principle, as a new theology), the result will be more subject matter, more avenues of research, more attention to neglected and marginalized areas of our society, more opportunities to cross cultural, ethnic, and gender lines, more work, in short, for academics. If, on the other hand, we harken to those who would hold back the tide and defend the beachhead won 35 or 50 years ago, the result will be more rules, more exclusionary mechanisms, more hoops to jump through, more invidious distinctions, more opportunities to be demeaning and be demeaned, more bureaucracy, more control. I know what I like. In the words of the old song, how about you?

If we put aside the defensive glibness at the end, this virtual enshrinement of cynicism as a principle is strikingly candid. The particulars of social practice celebrated by the pragmatists are reduced by Fish to so many enlargements of playing chances. To draw on one of his own favorite analogies, it is as if he were a baseball fan recommending adoption of the designated-hitter rule: tradition be damned, the new rule offers more chances to bat, more chances to score runs, less tedium, less thought, and more action.

Would that the question of whether there is anything of our cultural legacy worth defending partook of similarly innocent choices, choices without real consequences. What Fish has labored to produce in his critique of liberalism is actually a parody of liberalism: one in which the principles of neutrality and tolerance are taken to extremes and then married to an unfettered entrepreneurialism. It is a philosophy freed of anxiety about values and choices, or choices among values; a philosophy made safe for yuppies.

Generations

THE WARBURGS: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ODYSSEY OF A REMARKABLE JEWISH FAMILY. By RON CHERNOW. *Random House. 820 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN D. SARNA

THE history of the Warburg family begins modestly enough in the 16th century when one Simon von Cassel (d. 1566) received a charter permitting him to take up residence as a moneychanger and pawnbroker in the Westphalian town from which his family would later take its surname. His descendants, several of them lay leaders of the Jewish community, moved north from Warburg to Altona on the Elbe River and then, once restrictions against Jewish settlement were removed, to the fast-growing adjacent port city of Hamburg, where in 1798 the banking firm of M.M. Warburg & Co. was established.

Throughout the next century, the family flourished and spread. By 1906, the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (an American undertaking which the philanthropist Felix Warburg helped to finance) would enumerate no fewer than 28 localities across four continents where Warburgs had settled, and would list a bountiful 32 different occupations which members of the family had "taken up or married into."

In his brilliant chronicle of the 20th-century history of this family, Ron Chernow necessarily restricts himself to those Warburgs who have produced the greatest impact on their times. One line of the family stands out among all the others in this regard: the so-called

JONATHAN D. SARNA *is the Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University. He recently edited Marshall Sklare's* Observing America's Jews *(University Press of New England).*

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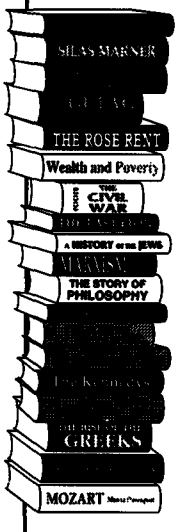

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Mittelweg Warburgs (named for the street in Hamburg where they grew up), the remarkable children of Moritz Warburg and his wife Charlotte Oppenheim. These seven children included four cosmopolitan sons who made history.

The first-born, Aby (1866-1929), an omnivorous reader and polymath, straddled genius and madness to become a pioneering art historian who singlehandedly transformed the study of culture. Specializing in Quattrocento Florence, he insisted, contrary to the wisdom of his day, that its art could be understood only in the context of the society and culture that permitted it to flourish. Toward this end, he established, initially for his own use, Hamburg's magnificent *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* (Warburg Library of Cultural Science), a unique collection of books and photographs now housed in the Warburg Institute of London.

Aby's brother Max (1867-1946), younger by a year, succeeded his father as head of M.M. Warburg & Co., and built it into the foremost private bank in Hamburg. Recognized as a brilliant student of international finance, he advised the German peace delegation at Versailles after World War I, was regularly consulted by Weimar government officials, and served on numerous German corporate boards until forced to resign by the Nazis. He simultaneously provided leadership to German Jewry through his work on behalf of communal organizations and philanthropies. To the end, he battled to sustain what he could of the sinking German-Jewish community, even as he helped emigrants transfer their assets to Palestine. Faced with imprisonment following the horrors of *Kristallnacht* in 1938, he settled permanently in the United States.

Paul (1868-1932), the third son, described by Chernow as "a financial prodigy . . . who made money without especially caring about money," joined his brother as a partner in the family bank and was one of the first Jews elected to the Hamburg *Bürgerschaft* (city-state council). In 1902, at the insistence of his American-born wife, Nina Loeb, he settled in New York and became a junior partner in her family's famous banking house of Kuhn, Loeb. It was, however, not as a banker that Paul subsequently made his reputation, but as a regulator. In the wake of the 1907 financial panic, he became the nation's leading proponent of central-banking legislation and the behind-the-scenes father of the Federal Reserve Act. Appointed by President Wilson to the new Federal Reserve Board, he quickly became its preeminent member. Insinuations that his loyalty was compromised by his German birth and family ties led Paul to "retire" from the board in 1918; Wilson sacrificed him to avoid a political battle. Settling back into the life of a private banker, he wrote a magisterial two-volume history of the institution he had done so much to create: *The Federal Reserve System—Its Origins and Growth* (1930).

Felix (1871-1937), the fourth and most jovial of the brothers, was principally a philanthropist, though he too was a banker by trade. When, in 1895, he married Frieda, the only daughter of the American-Jewish banker, philanthropist, and communal leader Jacob Schiff, he became the first of his brothers to settle in the United States. (It was at Felix's wedding that Paul met Frieda's young aunt, Nina Loeb; their subsequent marriage confused the family tree by turning Paul into his brother's uncle.) In America, Felix's generous nature found its ready outlet in communal service. Chernow describes him as a "philanthropic colossus, a one-man social-welfare agency," so eager to do good that even his benevolent father-in-law felt constrained to warn him against being "overgenerous." Countless educational, cultural, and social-service agencies, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, benefited from his time and largesse. In the fifteen years from 1922 to 1937 alone, he and Frieda contributed some $13 million—an amount roughly equivalent to $184 million today—to support more than 200 different charitable causes. In addition, he played a central role in the consolidation of American-Jewish philanthropy, helping to establish both the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, for relief of suffering Jews abroad, and New York's local Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. During their first critical years he chaired both of these organizations simultaneously.

The next generation of Mittelweg Warburgs, the grandchildren of Moritz and Charlotte, failed to match its parents' spectacular achievements. Edward M.M. Warburg, although intermarried, did keep alive the family's name in Jewish philanthropic circles, and Eric Warburg regained control of the family bank in Germany. But what Chernow says of Felix's children applies to most of the second generation, and even more so to the third. They seem, he writes, "less rounded, less complete, lacking the energy and drive of their ancestors." The family's creative force, Chernow suggests, passed to a different branch, the so-called Alsterufer Warburgs, whose most famous son, Siegmund George, established the English firm of S.G. Warburg & Company.

IN DETAILING the lives of these and a host of lesser-known family members—their achievements, failures, foibles, even a few closely guarded family secrets—Chernow seeks to clarify the mystery of the German-Jewish community as a whole. The Warburgs, he contends, embodied the essence of that community:

> [T]hey exhibited all the enterprise, daring, and philanthropy of the Jewish community in Germany. With their unfailing energy and high spirits, they adored music and literature, light verse and amateur theatricals, elegant parties and outrageous pranks. They financed German industry, influenced its politics, and enriched its culture. . . . [They] also displayed the shortcomings of German Jews. They could be snobbish, arrogant, and status-conscious, especially toward their East European brethren. They were often rigid, authoritarian parents. Superpatriotic and steeped in German culture, they exhibited a fierce, sometimes uncritical, devotion to Germany until it was too late.

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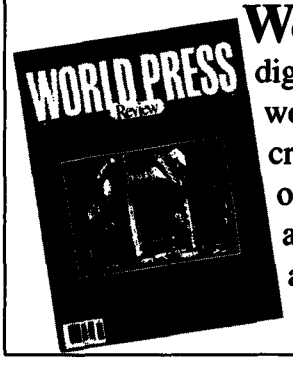

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Thus, Chernow shows, the Warburgs mirrored German Jewry's extreme devotion to the Fatherland during World War I. Aby, for example, "supported the war unreservedly to the end and believed that Germany's cultural superiority guaranteed the country's triumph." The larger Jewish community's ambivalence toward Zionism likewise found its analogue in the Warburg experience. Max, following the lead of his brother Felix in New York, came to espouse non-Zionism: he opposed the idea of a Jewish state yet "viewed Palestine as a possible sanctuary to restore the Jewish spirit." Meanwhile, akin to many young Jews of her day, his young daughter Gisela fell in love with Zionism, having been converted to the cause by none other than Chaim Weizmann. Lola, her older sister, went Gisela one better: she fell in love with Weizmann and the two maintained an illicit relationship for several years.

Finally, through the lives of the Warburgs, Chernow depicts the tortured efforts of the larger German-Jewish community to grapple with the rise of Nazism. As a leader of the community, Max in particular embodied the conflicts and ambivalences of those terrible times. In Germany he suffered mercilessly as a Jew; outside of Germany he pleaded for an end to the organized Jewish boycott of German goods. Publicly, he facilitated Jewish emigration; privately, he counseled Jews to remain true to their homeland. Alternatively portrayed by historians as either a hero or a villain for his activities during that time, Max was actually neither. Instead, as Chernow effectively demonstrates, he was a victim of his own inner turmoil—at once committed, courageous, and thoroughly confused.

THE ultimate tragedy of the Warburgs, Chernow concludes, lies in their struggle "with an insoluble identity crisis, trying to solve the riddle of who they were." They sought to "reconcile the contradictions of being Jewish and German, nationalist and internationalist, traditional and modern." Sadly, Chernow writes,

> the world didn't allow them the luxury of this tolerant cosmopolitanism. In the end, they were forced to choose among clashing aspects of themselves. As with many German Jews, they discovered that it didn't matter how they defined themselves. In the end, Adolf Hitler would do it for them.

For all of its surface persuasiveness, however, this turns out to be a somewhat flawed analysis. For one thing, it ignores the fact that two of the Warburg brothers, Paul and Felix, settled permanently in America prior to World War I. By 1939 both were dead, and several of their children had intermarried. Eventually, all but one of their children would marry non-Jews; some did so several times over, and among Warburg descendants today there are more Christians than Jews. Surely, Adolf Hitler had no impact on that.

Nor, so far as one can tell, did the Warburgs' "insoluble identity crisis" or their ongoing struggle to reconcile conflicting identities prove their undoing. If anything, it was the abandonment of that struggle that weakened the cultural fabric of the family. Those Warburgs who actually succeeded in occupying multiple worlds seem, in retrospect, to have been the most creative and successful members of the clan.

Finally, it seems unfair, even in terms of the German Warburgs, to condemn "the world" for having denied the family "the luxury of tolerant cosmopolitanism." Even if any such "luxury" actually existed (which is doubtful), the German Warburgs paid it no heed. Their real problem, as Chernow properly observes elsewhere—and it was not their problem alone—was that they "didn't love Germany wisely but too well."

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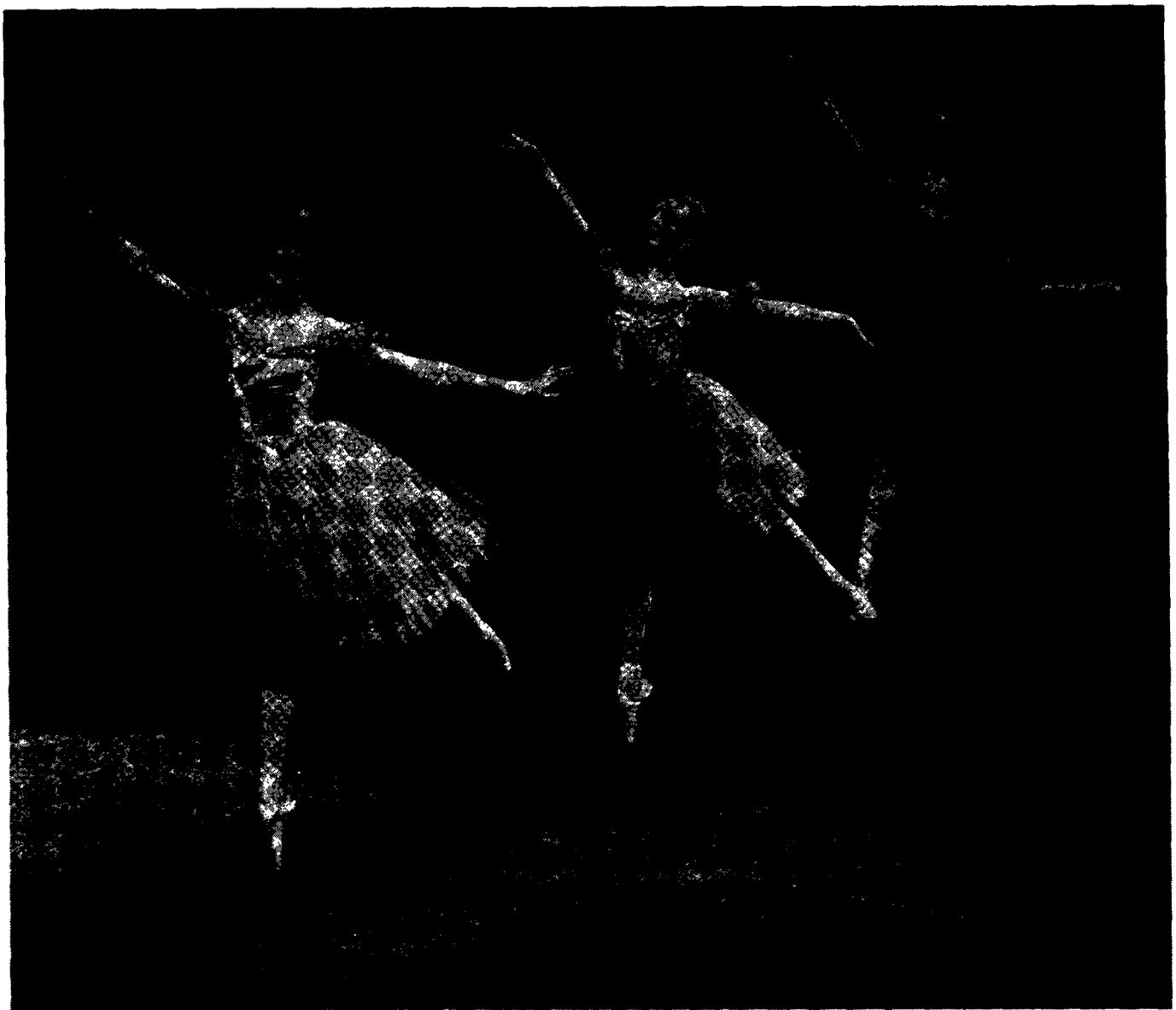

School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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